March 5, 2014

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-224
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-152
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
Rayburn House Office Building, 2138
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member, House Judiciary Committee
Rayburn House Office Building, 2142
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Leahy and Goodlatte and Ranking Members Grassley and Conyers:

I write on behalf of the American Bar Association to express our support for S. 1690 and H.R. 3465, the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2013. The ABA believes the reauthorization of the 2008 Act is essential to continue its evidence-based and cost-effective support for programs that improve reentry from prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities and that serve to advance public safety.

This bipartisan bill provides resources to state and local governments as well as community-based organizations to improve success rates for people released from prison and jail. It will provide crucial resources at a time when they are desperately needed. In 2009, federal and state prisons held over 1.6 million inmates—one in every 199 U.S. residents—and released 729,295 individuals back to their communities. More than 9 million individuals are released from jail each year. Unfortunately, most face numerous challenges when returning to the community from prison or jail, and over half are reincarcerated within three years of their release. Research confirms that comprehensive, coordinated services can help formerly incarcerated individuals find stable employment and housing, thereby reducing recidivism.

By providing the resources needed to coordinate reentry services and policies at the state and local levels, these bills will ensure that the tax dollars spent on corrections do not simply fuel a revolving door in and out of prison. State and local governments around the country, as well as community and faith-based organizations, are in dire need of these resources to address prisoner reentry and recidivism reduction efforts in our communities.
We commend you for introducing S. 1690 and H.R. 3465, the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2013. We look forward to working with you and your committees to support prompt passage of this vital reauthorization legislation.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Susman

cc: Members of the Judiciary Committees