June 4, 2015

The Honorable Rob Portman
United States Senate
448 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
437 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
United States House of Representatives
2449 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Danny Davis
United States House of Representatives
2159 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Portman and Leahy and Representatives Sensenbrenner and Davis:

I write on behalf of the American Bar Association to express our support for the introduction of the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2015 and to commend you for your leadership in this area. The ABA, with over 350,000 members from across the nation, believes that reauthorization of the 2008 Act is essential to providing continuity for its evidence-based and cost-effective support for programs that improve reentry from prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities and that serve, not incidentally, to advance public safety.

This bipartisan bill provides desperately needed resources to state and local governments, as well as community-based organizations, to improve success rates for people released from prison and jail. 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 jails 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. This level of recidivism is not inevitable: Research confirms that targeted “smart-on-crime” policies supporting comprehensive, coordinated services can help formerly incarcerated individuals find stable employment and housing, thereby reducing recidivism and reliance on incarceration, and, as an additional public benefit, reducing public spending on corrections.

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 the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2015 and look forward to working with you and your respective Committees to support prompt passage of this vital reauthorization legislation.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Susman

cc: Members of the Judiciary Committees