

November 28, 2017

The Honorable Robert "Bob" Goodlatte
United States House of Representatives
Chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary

Dear Chairman Goodlatte,

We, the undersigned faith leaders, write to call for comprehensive criminal justice reform. As constituents and leaders in the Sixth Congressional District of Virginia we urge Chairman Bob Goodlatte to show leadership once again in reintroducing his Sentencing Reform Act. The system of mass incarceration has devastated countless communities, leaving nearly one in five Americans with a criminal record. As people of faith we believe in the power of the Almighty and in the power of redemption. We seek justice for all of God's children, both the victims as well as those who commit crimes. When more than two million men, women, and children sit in cages, our society cannot be free or just.

Research and evidence shows us that mandatory minimums do not work and have dramatically worse effects in communities of color. Moreover, the U.S. Sentencing Commission has reported that about 70 percent of mandatory minimums are imposed on African American and Latino/a individuals.¹ We desperately need comprehensive criminal justice reform that addresses the inequities in every element of the system: sentencing, prisons, and reentry.

We applaud Representatives Collins and Jeffries for their introduction of the Prison Reform and Redemption Act H.R.3356. It was also heartening to see Representative James Sensenbrenner reintroduce the Second Chance Reauthorization Act H.R.2899 to help community based organizations and faith groups serve returning citizens. The reintroduction of the Sentencing Reform Act would complete a full and comprehensive criminal justice reform package to begin to make communities whole again.

As a faith community we believe in the power of redemption of all of God's children. We also seek a society with equity and justice for all. Excessive mandatory minimum sentences disproportionately harm our communities and rob men and women of, sometimes, decades of their most productive years of life. The Sentencing Reform Act would reduce these excessive sentences and pair well with the other pieces of reform already under consideration. We call on Chairman Goodlatte to reintroduce the Sentencing Reform Act.

Sincerely,

¹https://www.usc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/quick-facts/Quick_Facts_Mand_Mins_FY16.pdf

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