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The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
135 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
437 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy:

We commend you and the bipartisan group of Senators for your leadership and commitment to criminal justice reform, and for introducing the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015.

According to a 2014 Congressional Research Service report, the federal prison population has increased some 790 percent over the last two decades. A 2015 Pew Charitable Trusts study found that taxpayer spending on our federal prison system has increased approximately 595 percent in the last 30 years. Further, it is clear that our federal prisons have failed to rehabilitate the incarcerated as current federal prison programs are inadequate and recidivism rates are too high.

As members of the right-left coalition the U.S. Justice Action Network, we support policies that safely reduce our federal prison population and its associated costs while protecting our communities. In addition, we are committed to reforms that increase access to programs, such as educational opportunities and vocational training, and jobs that will help individuals with criminal records to re-enter society as well as cut recidivism rates.

As such, we are encouraged by the inclusion of the following provisions of the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015, which could have a meaningful impact toward promoting public safety, protecting families, strengthening communities, and reducing costs:

- Reduce enhanced mandatory minimums for prior drug offenses;
- Create certified recidivism reduction programming that incentivizes program completion through earned time credit;

- Expand the current safety valve to give judges more discretion in sentencing;
- Require federal agencies to report to Congress, and make publicly available, a list of all statutory and regulatory criminal offenses;
- Create a new safety valve designed to re-target the current 10 year mandatory minimum at the most serious offenders;
- Apply the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 retroactively;
- Provide for elderly and compassionate release for certain individuals older than 60;
- Seal and expunge the conviction records of certain nonviolent juveniles;
- Require the Attorney General to develop and enforce procedures for individuals to challenge the accuracy of their federal criminal records; and
- Limit the use of solitary confinement for juveniles.

While each of the undersigned organizations look forward to sharing individual recommendations as to potential improvements to the bill, we recognize that this is an important step forward and represents a good faith effort at advancing significant criminal justice reform. As such, we urge you to consider and markup this bill as soon as possible.

Signed,

Faith and Freedom Coalition

American Civil Liberties Union

Americans for Tax Reform

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

FreedomWorks

Center for American Progress

Right on Crime

NAACP