



December 11, 2018

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE:

The National Restaurant Association supports swift passage of the bipartisan “First Step Act” and urges the Senate to pass this bill before the end of the year.

As the leading business association for the restaurant and foodservice industry, the National Restaurant Association represents more than 15.1 million employees, nearly 10 percent of the nation’s workforce. With one million locations across the country, the \$825 billion in sales from the restaurant industry makes up four percent of the U.S. GDP.

Restaurants are woven into the fabric and essence of communities across America. When restaurants succeed, the economy succeeds. The key to success in the restaurant industry is a viable workforce as employee recruitment and retention remain the top challenge. As such, our industry is dedicated to workforce development opportunities, including apprenticeships, continuing education programs, and second chance initiatives that provide fundamental skills for career advancement. We were pleased to sign the White House’s Pledge to America’s Workers this past summer, committing to train nearly 370,000 individuals seeking industry careers over the next five years.

As a next step toward advancing workforce training opportunities, we are pleased to see the Administration working together with congressional leaders on the bipartisan “First Step Act.” This legislation would make important reforms to the criminal justice system, including recidivism reduction programing that will provide eligible incarcerated individuals with job-training opportunities. As a result, these individuals will be better prepared to secure gainful employment upon their release and reenter society as productive contributors.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We urge swift passage of this bipartisan legislation that addresses needed reforms and workforce challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shannon L. Meade".

Shannon L. Meade  
Vice President, Public Policy and Legal Advocacy  
National Restaurant Association