



The Honorable Charles Grassley
United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, DC 20510

February 9, 2018

RE: Support for the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, S. 1917

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Feinstein:

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decisions makers to end hunger in the United States and abroad. As the Judiciary Committee considers S. 1917, the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act this month, Bread for the World writes in support of this bipartisan bill.

Reforming our nation's criminal justice system is critical to ending hunger and poverty. Research suggests that poverty would have dropped by 20 percent between 1980 and 2004 if not for mass incarceration and the barriers associated with reentering society with a criminal record.ⁱ Unnecessarily long sentences, combined with limited rehabilitative programs for people in prison, exacerbate hunger, poverty, and existing inequalities in the United States, especially for communities of color, who are disproportionately incarcerated.

The impact of mass incarceration extends to family members and children. More than two-thirds of people who are incarcerated were legally employed before going to prison, and more than half were the primary source of financial support for their children.ⁱⁱ According to a study by the Ella Baker Center on Human Rights, 70 percent of households had difficulty meeting basic needs,ⁱⁱⁱ such as food and housing, when a family member is incarcerated. The Center also found that 3 out of 4 returning citizens report that it is "extremely difficult" or "impossible" to find a job post-incarceration^{iv}. Employment is a critical step to ending hunger and the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act would help prepare people to successfully re-enter the workforce.

The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act is an important step toward ensuring that the prison system offers people a chance at redemption while doing no harm to their long-term earning potential, and to their families, and communities. It also reforms some of the policies that have led to increased levels of incarceration. We would be happy to provide more information on the link between mass incarceration and hunger.

We thank the Committee for its thoughtful and bipartisan work to advance criminal justice reform. We urge you and your colleagues on the Committee to move quickly to pass the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act.

Sincerely,

Rev. David Beckmann
President

ⁱ Robert H. DeFina and Lance Hannon, "The Impact of Mass Incarceration on Poverty," *Crime and Delinquency* 59 (4) (2013): 562–586.

ⁱⁱ Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, *Collateral Costs: Incarceration Effect on Economic Mobility* (2010).

ⁱⁱⁱ "Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families." Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. September 2015.

^{iv} Ibid.