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July 31, 2017

**U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: 202-225-3951**

RE: The Prison Reform and Redemption Act

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers,

With more than 95 percent of prisoners ensured release and re-entry back into our communities upon completion of their sentences, it is vitally important to lower recidivism rates and create re-entry strategies to help prisoners transition back into society successfully. The primary objectives of incarceration are to punish and, ultimately, to rehabilitate. Yet our criminal justice system does little to incorporate measures that would guarantee lower rates of recidivism. Rearrest rates for ex-prisoners are as high as they are due, in part, to a lack of transition and integration support during and after release from prison.

The Prison Reform and Redemption Act, H.R. 3356, introduced by Rep. Doug Collins, R-Ga., would incorporate re-entry and rehabilitative reforms that aim to lower recidivism rates and provide ex-offenders the tools necessary to become productive members of their local communities.

H.R. 3356 tasks the attorney general with developing a “Post-Sentencing Risk and Needs Assessment System” (“system”) that would assess an individual’s risk of recidivism and provide guidance on the recidivism-reduction programs best-suited for each prisoner. It also directs the attorney general to consult with stakeholders; conduct research; rely on statistical and empirical evidence before making any decisions; and report to Congress with recommendations and updates following regular reviews of the system.

To encourage prisoners to participate, the Prison Reform and Redemption Act will grant each prisoner 10 days of earned time credit for every 30 days they participate successfully in any assigned recidivism-risk-reduction programming. Additional time credits are offered to prisoners who demonstrate a decrease in risk over time. Time credits are applied to the latter end of a prisoner’s sentence, allowing prisoners to

serve the end portion of a sentence in halfway houses or home confinement. Rewards for prisoner participants include family phone, video conferencing and visitation privileges.

It is important to note the time credits extended by H.R. 3356 do not reduce prisoners' sentences and do not take effect automatically. Time credits also would not be awarded to prisoners who have committed serious or violent felonies, such as terrorism or violent sex offenses.

With the associated costs of a growing prison population serving as a larger and larger drag on the Treasury, investing in evidence-based programs not only tackles the immediate issues, but also addresses public safety more generally. By promoting recidivism-reduction and re-entry programs, the bill could realize a significant reduction of the federal prison population. Moreover, implementation of this bill would make leaders in the criminal justice system more accountable.

We applaud congressional leaders' continued efforts to push forward much-needed criminal justice reform measures. For this reason and the other reasons stated above, the R Street Institute stands alongside Rep. Collins and is proud to support H.R. 3356, the Prison Reform and Redemption Act.

Sincerely,

Christina Delgado,

Justice Policy Manager
The R Street Institute