

MEDIA INFORMATION

Congresswoman

Sheila Jackson Lee

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Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee Supports Second Chance Act of 2007

Washington, DC –Today, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, senior Member of the House Judiciary Committee released the following statement in support of the H.R. 1593, “Second Chance Act of 2007”:

“As a proud Co-sponsor of H.R. 1593, the “Second Chance Act of 2007,” I fully understand the urgency in assisting state and local governments in better addressing the growing population of ex-offenders returning to their homes and respective communities. America has more of its people in prison than any other developed nation in the world - more than two million. The vast majority, 95% of the men and women in our prisons will eventually return to the community. That means that every year more than 650,000 offenders are released from state and federal prisons and return to civilian life.

“The Second Chance Act of 2007 focuses on four areas: (1) the developing and supporting programs that provide alternatives to incarceration; (2) expanding the availability of substance abuse treatment; (3) strengthening families; and (4) expanding comprehensive re-entry services.

“This piece of legislation also includes an amendment I offered during the Judiciary Committee markup of this bill in the 109th Congress. That amendment, incorporated in H.R. 1593 as Section 243 of the bill, requires that the:

Attorney General shall collect data and develop best practices of State corrections departments and child protection agencies relating to the communication and coordination between such State departments and agencies to ensure the safety and support of children of incarcerated parents (including those in foster care and kinship care), and the support of parent-child relationships between incarcerated (and formerly incarcerated) parents and their children, as appropriate to the health and well-being of the children.

“Maintaining strong parent-child bonds and enabling parents to improve themselves in prison are possible only if child welfare and corrections officials provide incarcerated parents and their children necessary reunification services. Notwithstanding the limitations imposed by ASFA, child welfare law requires states to make “reasonable efforts” to facilitate family reunification. In light of the unique barriers to family reunification families with incarcerated parents face, “reasonable” reunification efforts must include not only services tailored to the physical and emotional needs of parents and children separated by prison walls, but also a reasonable time period in which to draw meaningful and lasting benefits from such services both during and after parental incarceration.

“I am proud to support Congressman Danny Davis’s legislation H.R. 1593, the “Second Chance Act of 2007.” It is time for reform. The public is ready for it and so is the Congress and Administration. As a senior Member of the House Judiciary Committee, I am committed to providing the resources communities need to safely help ex-offenders reentry back into society.”

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