DATE

The Honorable Senator Robert Hertzberg, Majority Leader

Senate Majority Leader

California State Capitol, Room 313

Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

**RE: SB 369 (Hertzberg): California Reentry Commission – SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Hertzberg,

On behalf of INSERT YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME, I write in strong support of SB 369, which would establish the California Reentry Commission (CRC) in the California Health and Human Services Agency. SB 369 would require the commission to prepare and develop a new health and safety agenda for those returning home from prison or jail, conduct a review of reentry barriers, review current state criminal justice policies, and report to the legislature on the impact of COVID-19 on the reentry population, among other duties.

A brief description of your organization here…

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, people returning home from California’s prisons and jails already struggled to re-acclimate to society and meet their basic needs. In fact, a 2018 report published by Californians for Safety and Justice found that a quarter of people with a criminal conviction have trouble finding housing, and half struggle to pay fines and fees or secure a job. This difficult process of being routinely denied employment or housing because of past convictions instills in those reentering society a sense of hopelessness and despair, which often leads them back to criminal behavior. In the age of COVID-19, these challenges have only intensified and evolved. The overwhelming majority of people reentering society after serving their time are coming home to the communities hit hardest by this pandemic, both mortally and financially. As a result, thousands of Californians will come home to a place no safer than the jail or prison to which they were confined. The long-term impact on California’s families, communities, and the economy will be devastating.

Currently, nearly 30 states have established reentry a commission, coalition, council, or task force. These bodies have achieved widespread success by partnering with government entities, faith and community-based organizations, and key community stakeholders. New Jersey’s reentry commission, for instance, recently published a comprehensive report detailing 100 actionable steps the state could take to improve reentry services. Such work is desperately needed in California, the state with the largest reentry population in the nation.

We also know as a result of this pandemic, things will not go back to normal, and in some respects they shouldn’t. The advent of COVID-19 will require insightful policy recommendations, reforms and legislation that coordinates reentry services, quickly removes unnecessary barriers to employment and housing so that people returning home from jails and prisons can begin to heal physically and have the means to provide for themselves and their families financially.

The establishment of the California Reentry Commission (CRC) would leverage state leadership and resources to facilitate successful transition and reintegration of people returning home from prison and jails to various neighborhoods and communities all across the state. The CRC would better position the state to utilize federal, state and philanthropic resources aimed at enhancing the state's capacity to target and create durable, cost effective, evidence-based reentry solutions.

In service of the wellbeing of over eight million Californians impacted by the criminal justice system, their families, and the future strength of California’s economy and public safety , we are proud to support SB 369.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Organization

Email