



# LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS

To Reduce Crime & Incarceration

Chairman Bobby Scott  
1201 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Virginia Foxx  
2462 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Danny Davis  
2159 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Jim Banks  
1713 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Barbara Lee  
2470 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. J. French Hill  
1533 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Cedric Richmond  
506 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Ayanna Pressley  
1108 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

August 12, 2019

**RE: Law Enforcement Perspective and Support for REAL Act (H.R. 2168)**

Dear Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx, Rep. Davis, Rep. Banks, Rep. Lee, Rep. Hill, Rep. Richmond, and Rep. Pressley:

We write to you today as members of Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration, a national coalition of approximately 200 current and former law enforcement officials from all 50 states, across the political spectrum. We have dedicated our careers to fighting crime and keeping our communities safe. That same duty compels us to speak in support of H.R. 2168, also known as the Restoring Education and Learning Act (REAL) Act of 2019.

Informed by our experience serving as police chiefs, prosecutors, and sheriffs across multiple states, we are in agreement that higher education in prisons is one of the most effective ways to combat recidivism to keep our communities safe. Reinstating federal Pell grant eligibility for more incarcerated individuals will help provide the funding for increased access to education in our prisons.

This bill represents an opportunity for continued bipartisan success in criminal justice reform through federal legislation following the passage of the First Step Act. As with the First Step Act, we believe that a commitment to recidivism reduction programming, which the REAL Act will encourage, will have a significant positive impact on our incarcerated population and public safety.

Many studies have shown that prison education is an effective tool for lowering recidivism.<sup>i</sup> According to a 2013 study commissioned by the Department of Justice, incarcerated individuals who participate in education programs in prison are 43% less likely to recidivate compared to those who do not have the benefit of prison educational opportunities.<sup>ii</sup> In light of research showing that approximately two-thirds of offenders who leave prison are rearrested within three years,<sup>iii</sup> we believe that prison education is essential to stopping the revolving door of prison.<sup>iv</sup>

A lift of the ban on federal Pell grants imposed by the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 is a promising path forward.<sup>v</sup> Prior to the ban, the United States had approximately 772 college-in-prison programs operating in over 1,200 correctional facilities, almost all of which closed after passage of the 1994 Crime Bill.<sup>vi</sup> Although the federal government started a pilot program in 2016 to test the reintroduction of access to Pell grants in prison, that program does not go far enough to reduce recidivism more broadly. To date, the Second Chance Pell pilot program has resulted in the awarding of Pell grants to approximately 8,800 students in its first two years with 954 individuals receiving credentials thus far.<sup>vii</sup> The success of that program has led the Department of Education to recently announce an expansion of the pilot program, which would add additional programs for inmates.<sup>viii</sup>

While we applaud the success of the pilot program, we believe that we can and should go further. If the ban on Pell grants were lifted altogether, an estimated 64 percent of America's prison population would likely be eligible for a grant.<sup>ix</sup> Accordingly, if passed, the REAL Act would lead to much-needed investment in prison education programs.<sup>x</sup> In turn, inmates who benefit from new higher education opportunities in prison will be much more likely to successfully reenter society following release, ultimately promoting public safety.

In addition, a federal investment in prison education will save money. Indeed, the data suggest that every dollar spent on prison education saves \$4 to \$5 by reducing incarceration due to recidivism.<sup>xi</sup>

Expanded educational opportunity for inmates would be a boon to public safety that also provides a substantial cost savings for communities. For these reasons, the REAL Act is a worthwhile investment in our criminal justice system. We urge the House Committee on Education and Labor to swiftly pass the REAL Act out of committee and to continue to support the bill on the House floor.

Respectfully yours,



**Ronal W. Serpas**  
Executive Director  
Law Enforcement Leaders to  
Reduce Crime & Incarceration  
Former Police Superintendent  
New Orleans, Louisiana



**Taryn Merkl**  
Senior Counsel  
Law Enforcement Leaders to  
Reduce Crime & Incarceration  
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney  
Eastern District of New York

**Art Acevedo**  
Police Chief  
Houston, Texas

**Hassan Aden**  
Executive Fellow  
Police Foundation  
Former Police Chief  
Greenville, North Carolina

**Eric Atkinson**  
Police Chief  
Menomonie, Wisconsin

**Michael Brown**  
Police Chief  
Alexandria, Virginia

**Jim Bueermann**  
Former President  
Police Foundation  
Former Police Chief  
Redlands, California

**Zachary Carter**  
Former U.S. Attorney  
Eastern District of New York

**John Choi**

County Attorney  
Ramsey County, St. Paul, Minnesota

**Jerry Clayton**

Sheriff  
Washtenaw County, Michigan

**Brendan Cox**

Director of Policing Strategies  
LEAD Support Bureau  
Former Police Chief  
Albany, New York

**Richard Doran**

Former Attorney General  
Florida

**John Flynn**

District Attorney  
Erie County, New York

**Neill Franklin**

Executive Director  
Law Enforcement Action Partnership  
Former Police Commander  
Baltimore, Maryland

**Michael Freeman**

County Attorney  
Hennepin County, Minnesota

**Sim Gill**

District Attorney  
Salt Lake City, Utah

**Greg Hamilton**

Former Sheriff  
Travis County, Texas

**Brent Harris**

City Prosecutor  
Flagstaff, Arizona

**Timothy Heaphy**  
Former U.S. Attorney  
Western District of Virginia

**Peter Holmes**  
City Attorney  
Seattle, Washington

**John Hummel**  
District Attorney  
Deschutes County, Oregon

**James E. Johnson**  
Former Under Secretary for Enforcement  
U.S. Department of the Treasury

**Kevin Joyce**  
Sheriff  
Cumberland County, Maine

**Gil Kerlikowske**  
Former Commissioner  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Former Director  
Office of National Drug Control Policy  
Former Police Chief  
Seattle, Washington

**Peter Koutoujian**  
Sheriff  
Middlesex County, Massachusetts

**George Kral**  
Police Chief  
Toledo, Ohio

**David LaBahn**  
President and CEO  
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys  
Former Deputy District Attorney  
Humboldt County, California

**Cameron McLay**  
Former Police Chief  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**Joel Merry**  
Sheriff  
Sagadahoc County, Maine  
Former President  
Maine Sheriffs' Association

**Stephanie Morales**  
Commonwealth's Attorney  
Portsmouth, Virginia

**Peter Newsham**  
Police Chief  
Washington, District of Columbia

**Matthew Orwig**  
Former U.S. Attorney  
Eastern District of Texas

**Mark Osler**  
Professor and Robert and Marion Short Distinguished Chair in Law  
University of St. Thomas School of Law  
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney  
Eastern District of Michigan

**Brad Pigott**  
Former U.S. Attorney  
Southern District of Mississippi

**Bryan Porter**  
Commonwealth's Attorney  
Alexandria City, Virginia

**Timothy Purdon**  
Former U.S. Attorney  
District of North Dakota

**Rick Raemisch**

Former Executive Director  
Colorado Department of Corrections  
Former Sheriff  
Dane County, Wisconsin

**Richard Rossman**

Executive Director  
National Association of Former United States Attorneys  
Former U.S. Attorney  
Eastern District of Michigan

**Dan Satterberg**

Prosecuting Attorney  
King County, Washington

**Susan Segal**

City Attorney  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Kami Chavis Simmons**

Professor of Law and Director of the Criminal Justice Program  
Wake Forest University School of Law  
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney  
District of Columbia

**David Soares**

District Attorney  
Albany County, New York

**Rich Stanek**

Former Director  
National Sheriffs' Association  
Former Sheriff  
Hennepin County, Minnesota

**David Steingraber**

Former Police Chief  
Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

## **Darrel Stephens**

Former Executive Director  
Major Cities Chiefs' Association  
Former Police Chief  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina

## **Thomas Wine**

Commonwealth's Attorney  
Jefferson County, Kentucky

## **Stephen Zappala**

District Attorney  
Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

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<sup>i</sup> See generally LOIS M. DAVIS ET AL., RAND CORP., EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION: A META-ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE EDUCATION TO INCARCERATED ADULTS (2013), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR266.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html); see also PATRICK OAKFORD ET AL., VERA INST. OF JUSTICE, INVESTING IN FUTURES: ECONOMIC AND FISCAL BENEFITS OF POSTSECONDARY EFFECTS OF EDUCATION IN PRISON (2019), <https://www.vera.org/publications/investing-in-futures-education-in-prison>; DANIEL KARPOWITZ & MAX KENNER, EDUCATION AS CRIME PREVENTION: THE CASE FOR REINSTATING PELL GRANT ELIGIBILITY FOR THE INCARCERATED (Bard Prison Initiative 2003), [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/crime\\_report.pdf](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/crime_report.pdf) (analyzing federally-published data).

<sup>ii</sup> DAVIS ET AL., *supra* note i, at 39; see also OAKFORD ET AL., *supra* note i.

<sup>iii</sup> MARIEL ALPER, MATTHEW R. DUROSE & JOSHUA MARKMAN, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, 2018 UPDATE ON PRISONER RECIDIVISM: A 9-YEAR FOLLOW-UP PERIOD (2005-2014) (May 23, 2018), <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6266> (observing that that approximately two-thirds of offenders who leave prison end up rearrested within three years).

<sup>iv</sup> See generally Newt Gingrich & Van Jones, *Forward*, in EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION (Gerard Robinson & Elizabeth English Smith eds., Rowman & Littlefield 2019).

<sup>v</sup> See Max Kenner, *The Long History of College in Prison*, in EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION 19 (describing the history of prison education and Pell grants for prisoners).

<sup>vi</sup> *Id.*; see also ELLEN CONDLIFFE LAGEMANN, LIBERATING MINDS 9 (New Press 2016).

<sup>vii</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Secretary DeVos Builds on 'Rethink Higher Education' Agenda, Expands Opportunities for Students Through Innovative Experimental Sites* (May 20, 2019), <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/secretary-devos-builds-rethink-higher-education-agenda-expands-opportunities-students-through-innovative-experimental-sites> (last visited June 12, 2019).

<sup>viii</sup> *Id.*

<sup>ix</sup> OAKFORD ET AL., *supra* note i at 1.

<sup>x</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *supra* note vii (observing that over 200 schools submitted applications to participate in the Second Chance Pell program, resulting in selection of 64 schools in 26 states for the initial pilot program).

<sup>xi</sup> DAVIS ET AL., *supra* note 1.