

REP. DAVIS CALLS FOR INCREASE FUNDING OF THE HISTORIC 'SECOND CHANCE ACT'

WASHINGTON, DC (MAY 8, 2012) – CONGRESSMAN DANNY K. DAVIS DELIVERS POWERFUL FLOOR STATEMENT TO OFFER AMENDMENT TO INCREASE 'SECOND CHANCE' FUNDING TO THE COMMERCE, JUSTICE, STATE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

I rise to raise the awareness of a gradual but persistent scaling back of the Second Chance Act funding and urge my colleagues to support my amendment calling for a \$10 million dollar increase in 2013 funding.

As you know, states are facing historic fiscal challenges and are being forced to make difficult budget choices. And these choices are only made more difficult when prisons are packed to capacity and communities lack effective resources for dealing with offenders who return. The number of individuals in prisons and jails remains unacceptable, and the vast majority will be released back into their communities at some point. If current trajectories continue, state and federal prisons will grow another 13 percent in the next year, adding an additional 192,000 prisoners at a cost of \$27.5 billion.

In light of these challenges, the need for the Second Chance Act is greater now than ever before. The Second Chance Act is a common-sense response to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for people released from prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities and returning to our communities. Research confirms that comprehensive, coordinated services can help formerly incarcerated individuals find stable employment and housing, thereby reducing recidivism.

This is critical time. Huge advancements in reentry are being achieved on the state and local level, and major shifts have occurred on the national stage as well. We can't afford to lose the momentum that has been created by lessening our commitment or investment in the Second Chance Act, which is proving effective. Instead we have an opportunity to help further reduce the high rates of recidivism and improve the outcomes of formerly incarcerated individuals.

Last month, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued updated enforcement guidance on employers' use of arrest and conviction records when making employment decisions. In its guidance, the EEOC cited that hiring policies that include blanket exclusions of people with criminal records have a disparate racial impact, and therefore violate Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The new rules call for employers to assess applicants on an individual basis rather than excluding everyone with a criminal record through a blanket policy. The new policy also urges employers to give applicants a chance to explain their criminal record before they are rejected outright and marks momentous advancement in the employment arena for individuals who have been incarcerated.

In addition, the Second Chance Act grants are working and improving public safety. The Moms & Babies Program in Illinois's Decatur Correctional Center, a Second Chance grantee, has served 34 women. To date, no program participants have been returned to prison - a 0% recidivism rate. In San Mateo, CA of the 220 participants in their Second Chance Act program 61 have been returned to jail-a recidivism rate of 28 percent, well below the statewide average of 58 percent.

And at the federal level, reentry has become a high priority for many of the Cabinet agencies in President Obama's Administration. The Federal Interagency Reentry Council, established by Attorney General Holder in January 2011, represents a significant executive branch commitment to coordinating reentry efforts and advancing effective reentry

policies. It is premised on the recognition that many federal agencies have a major stake in prisoner reentry. The purpose of this group is to bring together numerous federal agencies to make communities safer, assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive, tax-paying citizens, and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.

These three major shifts in the reentry arena are signaling the progress being made because of the Second Chance Act, a monumental first step in addressing recidivism rates nationwide. It is also the foundation to build on as criminal justice agencies and communities struggle to find more effective strategies to keep neighborhoods safe and reduce victimization while using resources more efficiently.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment calling for an increase of \$10 mill in 2013 Second Chance Act funding to maintain the integrity of the program.