

February 20, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations  
2365 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on  
Appropriations  
437 Russell Senate Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member, House Committee on  
Appropriations  
1026 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

cc: Members of the House and Senate Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chair Shelby, Chair Lowery, Vice Chair Leahy, and Ranking Member Granger:

On December 21, 2018, President Trump signed the First Step Act (P.L. 115-391) into law after it passed through Congress with wide bipartisan margins in both chambers. Through this bill, Congress authorized \$75 million dollars to be appropriated annually to the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) for fiscal years 2019 through 2023.<sup>1</sup> We write to urge this committee to include the total authorized amount provided by the First Step Act in the appropriations for FY 2020 so that the BOP may implement the First Step Act's long-awaited and much-needed reforms.

The funds authorized to the BOP within this new law are imperative to the implementation of the First Step Act's incentive-based programming structure. This landmark bipartisan legislation is centered on a system of earned time credits, redeemable by individuals who participate in evidence-based, recidivism-reducing programming and productive activities. The BOP does not currently have the capacity to offer such rigorous programming to each person in its custody. New programs must be created, and current programs must be expanded. New and qualified staff must be hired to administer these programs. While the recidivism reduction and earned time credits will lead to cost-savings in the long run, neither will materialize if there are not programs and productive activities for prisoners to complete. And sufficient programming cannot exist without the BOP receiving the full amount authorized by the First Step Act.

We know that 97% of people who enter our federal prison system will one day return home into our communities. It is in our best interest that their time spent in prison is productive and rehabilitative so that they do not recidivate once their sentence is complete. Congress made its commitment to public safety clear when it passed the First Step Act; we now urge you to provide the full amount of funding authorized for its full implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our views. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

---

<sup>1</sup> P.L. 115-391, Section 104(a)

Sincerely,

**FAMM**

**American Conservative Union**

**Drug Policy Alliance**

**Justice Action Network**

**#cut50**

**Freedom Works**

**The Sentencing Project**

**Prison Fellowship**

**Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce**

**R Street Institute**

**Americans for Prosperity**