

July 8, 2019

Dear Federal Policymaker:

Every day in your district, families experience the incarceration of a loved one in a prison or jail, usually far away from home. These families tell us how difficult it is to stay connected to their incarcerated loved ones. We frequently hear about inadequate medical care, violence, and a paucity of meaningful rehabilitative programming. Sometimes, a family's worst nightmare comes true. We recently learned of the senseless death of a low-level drug offender who was placed in a dangerous maximum-security U.S. penitentiary. While most families expect their loved ones to be held accountable for their crimes, they also expect their loved ones to serve their sentences in safe facilities that will help prepare them for a crime-free life after incarceration.

Too often, lawmakers simply don't know what prisons or jails are like – and they can't know, unless they go and see for themselves. Families with incarcerated loved ones believe lawmakers would support smarter justice reforms if they took the time to visit a prison or jail and see what it is like. FAMM agrees. **To that end, FAMM asks you to take the #VisitAPrison pledge and visit a federal prison or jail within the next 12 months.**

The First Step Act has required the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to put a greater premium on safer conditions and rehabilitation. Our hope is that by visiting a federal prison, you will learn first-hand whether conditions in BOP facilities are safe and sanitary, whether the educational and rehabilitative programs promised by the First Step Act are being offered to those who need them, whether people are being incarcerated closer to home as the First Step Act requires, and whether those in prison are fully aware of the First Step Act's reforms to compassionate release. It is also our hope that you will come to a better understanding of what families in your districts must endure when they have to travel to visit their incarcerated loved ones.

We understand that running prisons is a difficult task. Visiting a prison is the best way for you to identify and understand the unique problems and challenges facing the BOP and develop effective policies that rehabilitate those incarcerated in the federal system.

If you've already visited a prison or jail, we applaud you and encourage you to take the pledge and go again. If not, make our challenge part of your first trip. Attached is further instruction on how to take the #VisitAPrison pledge and share your visit with your constituents and colleagues, as well as a guide on First Step Act implementation for your visit. Please feel free to reach out with any additional questions. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "KAR" in a stylized, cursive font.

Kevin A. Ring
President, FAMM