

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight

“Confronting Recidivism: Prisoner Re-entry Programs and
a Just Future for All Americans”

Testimony by
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Thank you Chairman for taking the Subcommittee’s time to examine this important issue and thank you Congressmen Portman and Davis for your work on behalf of the returning offender population.

P/PV is a national nonprofit organization seeking to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs—with a particular emphasis on workforce development issues. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase opportunities for residents of low-income communities.

The return every year of approximately 760,000 ex-prisoners threatens the already tenuous cohesion of many of the country’s most troubled communities. In response, P/PV developed and

launched a \$32.5 million national reentry initiative—***Ready4Work: An Ex-Prisoner, Faith and Community Initiative***—in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Justice and the Annie E. Casey and Ford Foundations. *Ready4Work* operates in areas of high crime to strengthen local support networks for young adults and juveniles as they reenter their communities following detention and/or incarceration. Our primary mission is to connect ex-offenders with employment opportunities and help them find the housing, transportation and childcare supports they need to sustain employment. Each participant is also matched to a volunteer mentor recruited through local faith-based and community organizations to provide personal support and assistance.

There are 16 sites from across the country—both secular and faith-based. I have included a full list for the record and P/PV would be happy to facilitate contact between the Committee and any of the participating organizations.

Ready4Work is currently in its second year of operation. The sites have thus far recruited over 2,000 participants—all nonviolent, non-sexual (except prostitution) felony offenders. Eighty-five percent of the participants are male and nearly 80 percent are African Americans. Of the adult participants, nearly 100 percent are receiving case management services; 64 percent have been placed in jobs and nearly half have been matched with mentors. In the juvenile sites, 64 percent are African American and 84 percent are male. Half are between the ages of 17 and 19. Almost 100 percent are receiving case management services; 79 percent are being mentored; 60 percent are receiving educational services; and 67 percent are receiving employment services.

What sets *Ready4Work* apart from traditional reentry efforts is its focus on placing faith-based and community organizations at the heart of the network. We believe these organizations are a unique source of accountability and support for returning offenders. They are frequently located in the most deeply affected neighborhoods and have resources that can make the difference between success

and failure for a returnee. Frankly, the compassion and commitment these groups bring to the work of reentry is irreplaceable.

We applaud those who have moved the issue of reentry to the top of Congress' agenda. P/PV believes that the Second Chance Act provides a solid basis for creating a national policy aimed at reducing crime and recidivism. We also believe that the bill should be strengthened to find ways to direct more assistance toward front-line institutions. We further believe that Congress should look for ways to match the program experience and technical-assistance capacity of larger, intermediary organizations with the “people power” of smaller groups. This has been the *Ready4Work* model — one that we believe offers the best chance to break the cycle of crime and imprisonment for the benefit of returning offenders and their communities.

Thank you again, Chairman Davis, for taking P/PV's efforts into consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with the 109th Congress to enact meaningful reentry legislation.

Submitted for the record:

Adult Ready4Work Sites

- Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland, CA
- America Works with Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, Detroit, MI
- East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership, Washington, DC
- Exodus Transitional Community, East Harlem, NY
- Holy Cathedral/Word of Hope Ministries, Milwaukee, WI
- Operation New Hope, Jacksonville, FL
- SAFER Foundation, Chicago, IL
- Search for Common Ground/Philadelphia Consensus Group, Philadelphia, PA
- The City of Memphis/Second Chance Program, Memphis, TN
- Union Rescue Mission, Los Angeles, CA
- Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church/Moving Forward InnerChange Freedom Initiative, Houston, TX

Juvenile Ready4Work Sites:

- Council of Churches of Greater Seattle, Seattle, WA
- Girls Re-entry Assistance and Support Program/The Office of the Kings Country District Attorney, Brooklyn, NY
- Los Angeles Ten Point Coalition/West Angeles Church of God In Christ, Los Angeles, CA
- Straight Ahead Ministries, Boston, MA
- Volunteers of America, Camden, NJ