

# AFL-CIO

## LEGISLATIVE ALERT

December 18, 2018

Dear Senator:

The AFL-CIO urges you to support the First Step Act (S. 756), a modest but necessary measure to reform our criminal justice system. Today, roughly 10 percent of America's 2.2 million prisoners are confined in federal prisons, almost half of whom are locked up for non-violent drug offenses. Too often, these prisoners are housed in conditions that endanger both prisoners and correctional officers. We commend the bill's sponsors for including in this bill important sentencing reforms and an improved version of the House-passed "First Step Act."

S. 756 will reduce incarceration rates for low level, non-violent offenders, and put more resources into programs that will reduce recidivism. By expanding the existing federal safety valve that can lead to reduced sentences and reducing the impact of certain mandatory minimums, the bill will help address prison overcrowding and the growing public cost of mass incarceration. We commend the authors for increasing the funding authorization to implement these reforms, which include programs for drug treatment, vocational training and other reentry and recidivism programs.

As others have noted, the bill excludes too many prisoners from benefitting from the reforms contained in the legislation. We hope the next Congress will take additional steps to reduce unnecessary and costly incarceration and create meaningful opportunities for second chances.

We urge you to vote for S. 756 and against amendments introduced by Senator Tom Cotton and Senator John Kennedy that would undermine the bipartisan compromises that led to this historic legislation.

Sincerely,



William Samuel, Director  
Government Affairs Department

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**American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations**

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