



ERLC Supports the RE-ENTER Act

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) upholds the belief that all men and women are created in the image of God and have the right to fair and just treatment under the law. God has established government as a legitimate authority to ensure justice for its citizens (Rom. 13:1). We believe true justice executed by the government not only punishes wrongdoers but also upholds the dignity (Gen. 1:26-27) of both parties and provides a path toward reconciliation for the offender. The ERLC is committed to advocating for policy changes that strengthen families and reintegrate past offenders to their communities.

Studies demonstrate that rehabilitation certificates improve housing and employment outcomes for the formerly incarcerated.¹ The Recognizing Education, Employment, New skills, and Treatment to Enable Reintegration Act of 2019, or the RE-ENTER Act, allows federal offenders to request a federal certificate of rehabilitation. These certificates would assist offenders with obtaining occupational licensing, housing, and employment while protecting employers who hire these offenders. This is a practical way to extend a second chance to people earnestly looking to become a productive member of their community.

The RE-ENTER Act is an important step in increasing successful reentry for the formerly incarcerated. The RE-ENTER Act both assists former offenders when returning to their communities and incentivizes those currently incarcerated to participate in rehabilitation programs. These programs set inmates up for successful reentry by providing opportunities for education and job training while completing their sentences; affording them positive actions to take during their imprisonment.

The SBC's resolution on "America's Growing Prison Population" affirms policy proposals that assist past offenders with "reintegration into society, including transitional housing, vocational and drug rehabilitation, and family support." This resolution is a reflection of Southern Baptist's long tradition of caring for those in prison, or who are otherwise in need (Matt. 25:36). The RE-ENTER Act is consistent with Southern Baptists' strongly held belief in the twin virtues of justice and redemption.

The ERLC strongly supports the bipartisan RE-ENTER Act, and urges Congress to swiftly pass this bill. The RE-ENTER act provides much needed support for those reintegrating back into their communities. Congress should continue its efforts to pursue a more just criminal justice system by passing the RE-ENTER Act.

¹ Jennifer Doleac, Strategies to Productively Reincorporate the Formerly-Incarcerated into Communities: A Review of the Literature, IZA Institute for Study of Labor Economics (June 2018), <http://ftp.iza.org/dp11646.pdf>.