

September XX, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: FY19 Conference Request for the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program at the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration

Dear Chairmen Blunt and Cole and Ranking Members Murray and DeLauro:

The undersigned reentry, justice reinvestment, faith- and community-based, workforce development, educational, and employment service organizations thank you for providing more than **\$93 million for the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) program within the Employment & Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor** in the FY19 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill. Authorized by section 169 of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the RExO program provides critical workforce preparation services for both adults and young people that increase employment and improve reentry outcomes. *We urge Congress to at least maintain this funding level in the final FY19 appropriations bill.*

Sustained, living wage employment and life skills are critical components to successful, long-term reentry. The RExO program prepares participants for jobs in local high-demand industries through career pathways and industry-recognized credentials. RExO includes a \$25 million set-aside to provide services to prepare young formerly incarcerated individuals for employment, including those who have not completed school or other educational programs. Given the program's strong employer and credentialing components, RExO is uniquely positioned to assist local organizations in developing and providing services that meet the needs of both the local business community and reentering individuals.

In light of the significant costs of the criminal justice system at the state, local, and federal levels, the RExO program is crucial to incubating community-based models of successful reentry through employment. RExO supported programs reduce recidivism by providing returning individuals the opportunity to acquire the skills and earning potential needed to take care of themselves and their families, as well as contribute to their communities. One study found that individuals who were employed and earning higher wages after release were less likely to return to prison within the first year.¹

¹ Christy Visher, Sara Debus, and Jennifer Yahner, *Employment After Prison: A Longitudinal Study of Releases in Three States* (Washington: Urban Institute, 2008)

Given the extensive reentry and employment needs nationwide, as well as the significant return on investment related to reduced incarceration costs and reduced crime costs borne by victims, families, and communities, we urge Congress to continue to robustly fund the RExO program in FY19.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this important issue. If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Jenny Collier at jcollier@colliercollective.org.

Sincerely,

Sign-on is in process: