



TITLE V

EXPANDING COMMUNITY AND REENTRY PROGRAMS

We, the People, call for expanding community and reentry programs, with the expectation that reentry services start at the first point of contact with the criminal legal system and no later than when a person is first incarcerated.

Reentry programs remain crucial when formerly incarcerated community members return home.

The People's Process reaffirmed that reentry programs require comprehensive community support—investments in healthcare, jobs, housing, education, safety, and restorative justice practices.

BAN THE BOX

Regardless of a reentry program's effectiveness, community members were clear that any program is thwarted when a community member cannot return home with a clean slate—meaning there is automatic expungement and record sealing. More

than 1 in 3 adults have criminal records and about half of children in the U.S. have at least one parent with a record, which governments, companies, institutions, and people use to deny them economic opportunities such as finding housing, securing a job, and enrolling in college.¹⁰⁵ Nearly 9 in 10 employers, 4 in 5 landlords, and 3 in 5 colleges use background checks, which often results in denied life-changing opportunities that lead to stability and economic mobility for our community members.¹⁰⁶

Along the same lines, community members talked about the need to expand post-conviction relief when a collateral appeal, a challenge to the legality of the conviction, is granted.

We call for lawmakers to:

- Require automatic sealing of all prior convictions, where the public will not have access to them, after an individual fulfills the sentence and expungements of all convictions. Prohibit access to sealed/expunged priors by law enforcement.
- Remove and restrict formerly incarcerated individuals and those with prior convictions from accessing federal resources, benefits, training, education, occupational licenses, and other resources. States and local governments should be incentivized to do the same.

COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED REENTRY SERVICES

Throughout The People's Process, community members emphasized the critical need for comprehensive, centralized, and community-coordinated reentry services. Our community members returning home often face a patchwork of reentry services. These decentralized structures undermine the intentions and desired results of how we want people to return, belong, and stay in our communities. Reentry services must also provide life-affirming resources like housing, job training, mental health counseling, restorative justice practices, and other key services at one location. These services must be offered by organizations that have a history and unwavering trust in the communities to which our formerly incarcerated individuals are returning.

We call for lawmakers to:

- Provide grants to community-based organizations and other eligible entities to create Community Reentry Centers to support system-involved individuals. All should operate with a health and healing lens.
- Create reentry implementation committees to improve the corrections-to-community transition strategy that maximizes the impact of available resources and improves individual outcomes.

HOUSING

Our country must eliminate the prison-to-homelessness pipeline and upend laws, regulations, and policies that criminalize poverty, which is often

the result of failed or absent government policies and the misallocation of resources by local, state, and federal governments. One 2018 study found that formerly incarcerated people are almost ten times more likely to be unhoused.¹⁰⁷ Having a place to live is imperative to creating economic stability and can contribute to better health outcomes, especially for many formerly incarcerated people who depend on shelters immediately after release and long term.¹⁰⁸

Further, our government must remove all barriers to formerly incarcerated individuals accessing and maintaining housing, including barriers to accessing subsidized housing and direct discrimination by landlords who refuse to rent to them or evict them because of their legal record. This is especially true

for Black and Brown formerly incarcerated individuals who confront the highest rates of housing denials.¹⁰⁹ Many community members called for addressing “one-strike,” nuisance, and no-fault eviction policies that target them and are often used as excuses for eviction, in both public and private housing, especially when landlords want to cash in with gentrification. Community members emphasized that everyone needs housing that is accessible and affordable. It is a fundamental human right.

We call for lawmakers to:

- Create access to sustainable, safe, and deeply affordable housing for all formerly incarcerated individuals, no matter the charge or conviction.
 - Ban one-strike and no-fault eviction policies in housing, demand higher standards of proof and individualized review processes, and expand resources to providers actively seeking to house and provide critical services to system-involved individuals.
 - Provide incentives to landlords to offer safe, secure, and accessible housing to formerly incarcerated individuals.
 - Incentivize states to eliminate residency restrictions based on legal history.
 - Provide grants to support the establishment of safe houses for victims of domestic violence and their families.
 - Incentivize banks to offer home loans for formerly incarcerated individuals.

EDUCATION, JOB TRAINING, AND JOB PLACEMENT

Investing in education, including knowledge, skills development, and job opportunities, throughout the entire time of incarceration makes our community members better prepared to reenter society and gain employment. While about two-thirds of formerly incarcerated individuals are rearrested within three years,¹¹⁰ incarcerated people engaged in educational prison programs had a 43% lower recidivism rate and a 13% higher employment rate than those who did not.¹¹¹

We call for lawmakers to:

- Expand education opportunities in prison settings for on-demand access.
- Provide grants to states and localities to provide formerly incarcerated individuals with vocational training in high-demand industries.

HEALTHCARE

Access to high-quality healthcare is a basic human need, and it remains deeply concerning that upon release, formerly incarcerated individuals are 129 times more likely to die of a drug overdose during the first two weeks after release.¹¹² While overall health is a priority, our community members also expressed the specific need to have full access to high-quality resources that combat substance use disorder. One study finds that 52% of people arrested multiple times reported having a substance use disorder in the past year. Additionally, people arrested more than once were three times more likely to have a mental health condition. Further, people arrested more than once were also three times more likely to have no health insurance.¹¹³

We call for lawmakers to:

- Allow Medicaid payment for medical services furnished to incarcerated individuals during the 90-day period preceding release.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND THE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES

Community members specifically talked about how safety net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) were wielded against community members returning home as part of the disastrous and destructive War on Drugs policies in the 1990s. For example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) banned formerly incarcerated individuals from receiving benefits—despite the status of food security as a baseline condition for achieving effective reentry.¹¹⁴ As discussed in Title I, safety net programs like SNAP and TANF create economic and health stability and contribute to the safety of communities.

We call for lawmakers to:

- Reinstatement of all social services and require the removal of all barriers to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for individuals with prior convictions.

VOTING RIGHTS

Felony disenfranchisement continues to undermine our democracy and has disproportionately affected Black citizens through antiquated laws that intend to exclude them from civic engagement and electoral representation. Our community calls for the restoration of voting rights as nearly 4.4 million citizens whose voting rights remain denied due to felony convictions.¹¹⁵

We call for lawmakers to:

- Secure the federal voting rights of all individuals and register them automatically when released from incarceration.





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This title proposes the following provisions for lawmakers to make law:

- **Sec. 501. One-stop reentry centers nationwide.** Provides grants to community-based organizations and other eligible entities to create Community Reentry Centers to support system-involved people. All should operate with a health and healing lens.
- **Sec. 502. Restoration of benefits.** Reinstates all social services and requires the removal of all barriers to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for individuals with prior convictions.
- **Sec. 503. State Reentry Coordinating Committees.** Creates reentry implementation committees to improve the corrections-to-community transition strategy that maximizes the impact of available resources and improves individual outcomes.
- **Sec. 504. Housing access.**
 - Bans one-strike and no-fault policies in housing, demands higher standards of proof and individualized review processes, and expands resources to providers actively seeking to house and provide critical services to system-involved individuals.
 - Provides incentives to landlords to offer safe, secure, and accessible housing to returning citizens.
 - Incentivizes states to eliminate residency restrictions based on criminal history.
 - Provides grants to support the establishment of safe houses for victims of domestic violence and their families.
 - Incentivizes banks to offer home loans for formerly incarcerated individuals.
- **Sec. 505. Medicaid Reentry Act.** Allows Medicaid payment for medical services furnished to an incarcerated individual during the 90-day period preceding release.
- **Sec. 506. Clean Slate.**
 - Requires automatic sealing of all prior convictions after an individual fulfills the sentence and requires expungement of all convictions.
 - Prohibits access of sealed/expunged priors by law enforcement.
- **Sec. 507. Federal voting rights reform.** Restores the right to vote to incarcerated people and registers them automatically.
- **Sec. 508. Expansion of collateral consequences relief.**
 - Removes restrictions for formerly incarcerated individuals and those with prior convictions from accessing federal resources, benefits, training, education, occupational licenses, and other resources.
 - Provides incentives to state and local governments to do the same.
- **Sec. 509. Expands vocational training opportunities.** Provides grants to states and localities to provide formerly incarcerated individuals with vocational training in high-demand industries.