



FAITH & FREEDOM COALITION

February 13, 2024

Members of the Alabama Legislature
State Capitol
Montgomery, AL 36104

Dear Sir or Madam,

Through its 25 state affiliates and 2.5 million members nationwide, the Faith and Freedom Coalition promotes public policy that strengthens families, promotes time-honored values, and provides for a just society because we believe the greatness of America lies in the character of her people—the virtues of faith, marriage, family, hard work, personal responsibility, and helping the least among us. The Coalition is committed to educating, equipping, and mobilizing people of faith and like-minded individuals to be effective and active citizens and voters. In pursuing this mission, I write in support of AL HB 29—The Second Chance Bill.

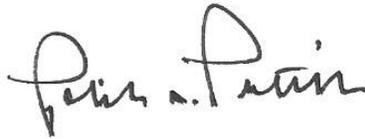
HB29 creates a legal pathway for judges to review cases of individuals who were sentenced to life without parole under the Habitual Felony Offender Act for crimes that involved no physical injury (non-homicide, non-sex crimes), and were sentenced prior to May 26, 2000. Alabama's prison system is seriously overcrowded and terribly expensive. Creating a mechanism to review long sentences is important because it helps prison officials better manage their facilities while also reviewing whether the ends of public safety are still being served decades after the original sentence was handed down. HB 29 does this in a responsible manner by allowing the original sentencing judge or current presiding circuit judge of the jurisdiction of conviction to resentence an eligible individual to time served if they decide after their review that their case or sentence warrants it. HB 29 also requires that the victim and the District Attorney to be notified and given a chance to be heard at the hearing. In fact, law enforcement is involved in the entire process to ensure the sentence reduction is warranted and furthers the public interest in safety and justice.

Importantly, HB 29 does not result in the automatic release of any incarcerated person. This bill only allows eligible individuals to have their cases reviewed by the sentencing judge. This smart approach will help Alabama avoid what happened in California where a federal judge ordered a mass release of prisoners to address that system's overcrowding. HB 29 is a responsible mechanism to avoid that type of indiscriminate release.

In addition to the safeguards HB 29 has in place to ensure law enforcement and victims are part of the review process, the bill would affect a relatively small number of prisoners. In fact, only a few hundred people would be eligible to have their sentences reviewed so it will not result in a mass release or overburden the court system.

I urge you to join us in supporting the Second Chance Act as the legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick D. Purtill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "D".

Patrick D. Purtill
Director of Legislative Affairs
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