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June 13, 2017

The Hon. Rick Scott
Office of the Governor
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Gov. Scott:

The undersigned organizations write to voice support for S.B. 118, which both the House of Representatives and Senate have passed unanimously.

S.B. 118 is part of an effort to secure Floridians' right to a presumption of innocence and privacy, as well as the ability to avoid stigma. This bill addresses barriers to employment for those who have repaid their debt to society, as well as for those who have been arrested but never convicted of a crime. Where an individual has been acquitted, proven innocent or seen charges dropped altogether, having one's arrest photo accessible to others in public forums can have detrimental effects on a person's ability to obtain employment or housing, or to maintain these necessities once procured.

Poverty is a common challenge for those attempting to reintegrate after time served, particularly those with minimal skills. Such individuals often struggle to find and maintain work, a crucial step toward the kind of permanent self-sufficiency that minimizes dependence on the state. For those leaving our prison system, stable work provides the strongest path toward reintegration. For others who encounter a sudden economic disruption—such as job loss or a serious health condition—ease of access to the labor market is crucial.

Toward that end, if an individual is working toward his or her second chance in life following a completed stint in prison, barriers to employment make transition into society more difficult. Not only do they make someone more prone to dependency on the government, they also may prompt some to turn back to a life of crime in order to survive. This cycle causes recidivism rates to rise unnecessarily and at great expense to society at-large.

With at least 95 percent of all state prisoners re-entering society at some point, it is imperative to consider this issue as one that affects all members of our community.

It also is important to note that concerns raised about the bill's language dealing with administrative seals of criminal history records, contained in Section 2, are no longer relevant. As the text of S.B. 118 indicates, Section 2 was dependent on the Legislature's adoption of S.B. 450, a public records bill. Given that S.B. 450 recently died in the Senate, Section 2 of SB 118 is consequently rendered null.

We, therefore, ask for your support of S.B. 118. Your signature will provide Floridians a deserved and more reasonable chance at self-sufficiency and dignity.

Respectfully submitted,

R Street Institute

The Center for the Study of Occupational Regulation, Saint Francis University

National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

