

2021 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 43

BY SENATOR MIZELL

SPECIAL DAY/WEEK/MONTH. Recognizes April 2021 as Second Chance Month.

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A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To recognize April 2021 as Second Chance Month and honors the work of communities, governmental institutions, nonprofits, congregations, employers, and individuals to remove unnecessary legal and societal barriers that prevent individuals with a criminal record from becoming productive members of society.

WHEREAS, every person is endowed with human dignity and value; and

WHEREAS, redemption and second chances are American values; and

WHEREAS, an estimated seventy million American citizens have a criminal record;

and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Justice reports that more than six hundred thousand individuals returned to their community from state and federal prisons in 2019, including more than sixteen thousand from Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, individuals who have paid their debt after committing a crime face significant barriers, also known as collateral consequences, to reintegrating into society; and

WHEREAS, the Council of State Governments reports that the number of legal collateral consequences of a criminal conviction exceeds forty-four thousand, including thirteen thousand and three hundred and forty consequences unique to Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, America's youth face more than one thousand collateral consequences

1 affecting their high school and higher education; and

2 WHEREAS, many of these consequences are mandatory, without taking into account
3 the seriousness of the offense, the time passed since the offense, the individual's efforts to
4 make amends and earn back the public's trust, or whether the consequence has a proven
5 public safety benefit; and

6 WHEREAS, gaining meaningful employment is one of the most significant
7 predictors of successful reentry and reducing future criminal activity; and

8 WHEREAS, ninety percent of those who have previously been incarcerated struggle
9 to find employment because of both societal and legal barriers, which are often not directly
10 related to the offense committed or any proven public safety benefit; and

11 WHEREAS, every jurisdiction has laws that prohibit individuals with a criminal
12 record from working in certain industries, such as cosmetology, operation of arcade games,
13 automotive parts recycling, camping equipment sales, boiler inspection, and many others;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, over sixty percent of employers report they would not be willing to hire
16 someone with any criminal record and many employers utilize a blanket no-hire policy for
17 individuals with a criminal record; and

18 WHEREAS, education has also been shown to be a significant predictor of successful
19 reentry; and

20 WHEREAS, those with a criminal record have lower levels of educational attainment
21 than the general population and have significant difficulty acquiring admission to and
22 funding for educational programs; and

23 WHEREAS, individuals convicted of certain crimes are barred from receiving the
24 financial aid necessary to acquire additional skills and knowledge; and

25 WHEREAS, many individuals, regardless of their efforts to live positively, are
26 denied admission to institutions of higher education on account of their criminal record
27 despite a lack of empirical evidence showing a campus safety risk; and

28 WHEREAS, people with a criminal history also face significant barriers in securing
29 a place to live; and

30 WHEREAS, fifty-six percent of landlords are unwilling to rent to an individual with

1 a criminal record containing a felony charge and thirty-two percent are unwilling to rent to
2 an individual with a previous misdemeanor conviction; and

3 WHEREAS, individuals with a criminal history are also barred from seeking access
4 to public housing or receiving public housing assistance; and

5 WHEREAS, this inability to access housing has been found to increase the number
6 of individuals returning to prison; and

7 WHEREAS, many people with a criminal history also face other significant
8 challenges such as significant debts as a result of their conviction and incarceration, the
9 inability to make amends by volunteering, as well as difficulty in securing identification
10 documentation; and

11 WHEREAS, all of these barriers prevent the seventy million Americans with
12 criminal records from contributing fully to their families and communities; and

13 WHEREAS, these barriers can contribute to recidivism, which increases
14 victimization and decreases public safety; and

15 WHEREAS, the inability to find gainful employment and other collateral
16 consequences of conviction inhibit the economic mobility of people with a criminal history,
17 which negatively impacts the well-being of their children and families for generations; and

18 WHEREAS, the legal barriers and stigma associated with a criminal record results
19 in lost human capital and lost economic output for the United States; and

20 WHEREAS, the anniversary of the federal Second Chance Act of 2007, which has
21 provided reentry services to more than one hundred and sixty-four thousand people in
22 forty-nine states and the District of Columbia since the anniversary of the law's passage, falls
23 on April 9th; and

24 WHEREAS, the anniversary of the death of Charles Colson, who used his second
25 chance following his incarceration for a Watergate-related crime to found Prison Fellowship,
26 the nation's largest outreach to prisoners and their families, falls on April 21, 2021; and

27 WHEREAS, a robust coalition of businesses, congregations, and other organizations
28 across the country has celebrated Second Chance Month since April 2017 through events,
29 Second Chance 5Ks, briefings, social media campaigns, advocacy, press, and other
30 activities; and

1 WHEREAS, the designation of April 2021 as Second Chance Month can contribute
2 to increased public awareness about the challenges faced by those who have paid their debt
3 to society as well as opportunities for individuals, employers, congregations, and
4 communities to extend second chances.

5 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
6 recognize April 2021 as Second Chance Month and honors the work of communities,
7 governmental institutions, nonprofits, congregations, employers, and individuals to remove
8 unnecessary legal and societal barriers that prevent individuals with a criminal record from
9 becoming productive members of society.

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to
11 Prison Fellowship.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Carla S. Roberts.

SCR 43 Original	DIGEST 2021 Regular Session	Mizell
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