



**National
Urban League**

Marc H. Morial
President and CEO

80 Pine Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10005

Phone 212 558 5300
Efax 646 568 2185

www.nul.org
presidentoffice@nul.org

**Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.**

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Honorable Elijah Cummings
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cummings and Ranking Member Jordan:

As President and CEO of the National Urban League, and on behalf of its 90 affiliates representing 300 communities in 36 states and the District of Columbia, we are pleased to extend our full support for HR1076, the *Fair Chance to Compete for Jobs Act of 2019 (Fair Chance Act)*. This bipartisan, “ban the box” legislation would open the door to securing self-support by the formerly incarcerated by requiring the federal government and federal contractors to postpone a request for criminal history information from job applicants until that job seeker has received a conditional offer of employment.

This much needed and long overdue legislation would bring the federal government in line with the 33 states and over 150 cities and counties that have taken steps to remove barriers to employment for otherwise qualified workers with criminal records.¹ Of these jurisdictions, 11 states, the District of Columbia, and 16 cities and counties have extended their fair-chance hiring policies to private employment.²

The Fair Chance Act is especially crucial for communities of color who are disproportionately impacted at every stage of our criminal justice system. According to a brief by the Vera Institute of Justice,³ Black men comprise about 13% of the male population, but about 35% of those incarcerated. One in three Black men born today can expect to be incarcerated in his lifetime, compared to one in six Latino men, and one in 17 white men.⁴

Black women are similarly impacted: one in 18 Black women born in 2001 is likely to be incarcerated sometime in her life, compared to one in 111 white women.⁵ The brief outlines the systemic challenges faced by African Americans where “bias by decision makers at all stages of the justice process disadvantages black people. Studies have found that they are more likely to be stopped by the police, detained pretrial, charged with more serious crimes, and sentenced more harshly than white people.”⁶ Their lives are further compounded upon release, facing dim prospects for employment given their criminal record.

The National Urban League has been serving the formerly incarcerated for more than fifty years. Through our efforts, enrolled participants are afforded the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials, learn employment-focused skills, and form positive relationships with their communities. We offer workforce development, targeted training, mentoring, and support services through the help of our Urban League Affiliates. The *Fair Chance Act* would

serve as a tremendous complement to our work by removing those unfair barriers that block the doors to self-sufficiency.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that this bipartisan, bicameral bill is enacted into law expeditiously.

Sincerely,



Marc H. Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

¹National Employment Law Project, see <https://www.nelp.org/campaign/ensuring-fair-chance-to-work/>

²*Id.*

³ "An Unjust Burden: The Disparate Treatment of Black Americans in the Criminal Justice System," By Elizabeth Hinton, Assistant Professor, Department of History and Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard University, LeShae Henderson, Special Assistant, Research, Vera Institute of Justice, and Cindy Reed, Senior Editor, Vera Institute of Justice, May 2018. Accessed at https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/for-the-record-unjust-burden/legacy_downloads/for-the-record-unjust-burden-racial-disparities.pdf

⁴*Id.*

⁵*Id.*

⁶*Id.*