

July 30, 2013

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
United States Senate
Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: Criminal Justice and Civil and Human Rights Advocates Support of the Bipartisan
“Smarter Sentencing Act of 2013” Sponsored by Senators Durbin and Lee.**

We, the undersigned criminal justice, civil rights and human rights advocacy organizations, are writing to express our support for Senators Durbin and Lee’s Smarter Sentencing Act (SSA) of 2013, a bill that will address some of the causes for the unsustainable and unnecessary growth in the federal prison population by helping to reduce lengthy sentences for certain people convicted of non-violent offenses.

focus more on “smart on crime” policies. This bipartisan bill introduced by Senators Durbin and Lee does just that by taking an incremental approach to modernizing drug sentencing policy. The legislation would:

Expand the safety valve : The safety valve is one of the only means for a judge to sentence below a mandatory minimum in appropriate cases. This bill would make more non-violent drug offenders eligible for the safety valve, thus allowing judges to use more discretion to determine sentences.

Reduce mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses: The bill would lower existing mandatory minimum sentences for certain drug offenses, which would help alleviate the growth of prison costs and overcrowding.

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