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STATE OF VERMONT
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS
AND INSTITUTIONS

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April 17, 2019

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator
199 Main St., 4th Floor
Burlington, VT 05401

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
U.S. Senator
1 Church St., 3rd Floor
Burlington, VT 05401

The Honorable Peter Welch
U.S. Representative
128 Lakeside Ave., Suite 235
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders, and Congressman Welch:

The Vermont House Corrections and Institutions Committee (Committee) respectfully requests any assistance you can provide to help resolve an issue our Department of Corrections (DOC) is having with the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA). DOC has identified the lack of a government Identification Card (ID) as a significant barrier preventing offenders from entering the workforce and becoming productive citizens.

An individual typically requires identification documents for a number of reasons, including to obtain benefits and services or apply for employment. It is often the case that an offender needs new identification documents upon release because identification possessed prior to entry in a correctional facility is lost or expired during the period of incarceration.

The Committee and DOC are working with other State and federal agencies, including the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles, the Vermont Department of Health, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, to provide offenders with access to identification documents.

As part of this initiative, the DOC has also requested meetings with the SSA both locally and regionally to identify a process for providing offenders access to Social Security cards. A Social Security card is a form of identification that is vital to the reentry process because it is required for an offender to obtain employment upon release. The Committee is aware that the SSA has developed partnerships in other states to enable offenders to obtain a Social Security card prior to

reentering the community. It is the Committee's understanding from DOC that their attempts to engage the SSA in Vermont have been unsuccessful.

We would greatly appreciate it if you could assist in facilitating communication between the appropriate personnel within the SSA and DOC that will enable us to establish the kind of working relationship other states enjoy.

Thank you for all that you do for Vermont, and we look forward to coordinating with you in the coming months about this important issue.

Sincerely,

Representative Alice M. Emmons, Chair