



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

April 22, 2016

The Honorable Robert Bentley
State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Governor Bentley:

As you know, the federal prison system has grown dramatically over the past several decades. Recidivism reduction continues to be an important priority for the Department of Justice and successfully reintegrating our returning citizens is a crucial step in meeting that goal. Each year more than 41,000 men and women are released from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) back to U.S. communities and many face unnecessary roadblocks to getting a job and finding a place to live—making it more likely that individuals will slip back into the patterns that landed them in the criminal justice system in the first place.

Access to government-issued identification documents is critical to successful reentry. Without government-issued identification, men and women leaving correctional facilities face extreme challenges securing employment and housing, registering for school, opening bank accounts, and accessing other benefits, such as health care, that are critical to successful reintegration. Recognizing these challenges, several states have taken a variety of actions to assist returning citizens in obtaining identification.

For example, Arizona, California, Illinois, Montana, Ohio, Utah, and Wisconsin permit those leaving state correctional facilities to either exchange department of corrections documentation for state-issued identification or for those documents to satisfy the primary identification document requirement for state-issued identification. Others like Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, and Wyoming have developed separate programs and policies to ensure returning citizens have valid state identification on release.

Unfortunately, these state-focused programs are rarely accessible to the thousands of citizens that return home from federal facilities each year. This is why I am writing to seek your assistance. The Department of Justice would like to work with you to permit citizens returning to Alabama to exchange their federal BOP inmate identification card and authenticated release documentation for state identification or for these documents to satisfy the primary identification document requirement for state-issued identification. BOP identification cards already contain a

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current photograph, eye color, and height. The release documentation contains the individual's current local address, signature, supervision information, and the date of release.

We understand that Alabama may have specific needs or requirements to participate in such a program; we are ready and willing to consider how we might meet those needs – including through development of additional security features on the identification card or attestation documents. I have asked BOP to reach out to your office in the coming months to begin these conversations. Brent Kiser, Administrator at BOP's National Reentry Affairs Branch, will be the Bureau's point of contact and your staff is welcome to contact him in the interim at 202-353-3605 or via email at Clay.B.Kiser@usdoj.gov.

With the help of extraordinary partners like you and with the determination and fortitude that states have shown, I believe that we can give returning citizens their best chance to lead lives of meaning and purpose. Thank you for your commitment and collaboration on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Loretta E. Lynch
Attorney General