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September 26, 2011

As President and CEO of Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc. – nonprofit organization currently serving more than 9,000 men, women and children in need throughout Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia – **I am writing to urge you to support funding for the Second Chance Act in fiscal year 2012.**

The Second Chance Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, helps our communities address the growing population of individuals returning from prisons and jails. It is supported by corrections and law enforcement officials, state and local policy makers, faith-based groups and community organizations.

New figures, released this April from the Pew Center on the States find **more than four out of 10 adult American offenders still return to prison within three years of their release.** As stated in the Pew report, *State of Recidivism: The Revolving Door of America's Prisons*, “the system designed to deter them from continued criminal behavior clearly is falling short. That is an unhappy reality, not just for offenders, but for the safety of American communities.”

**Yet there is reason for hope.** Research shows that when individuals returning from prison have access to key treatments, education, and housing services, recidivism rates go down and the families and communities they return to are stronger and safer.

**Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Residential Re-Entry Center, located in Baltimore, is proof that these programs work. While the national recidivism rate is more than 40%, the recidivism rate for the men and women who go through our program is 15%. Our program also has an employment placement rate for our residents, within 30 days of entering our program, of more than 75%.**

For more than 30 years, Volunteers of America Chesapeake's Residential Re-Entry Center has assisted men and women in making a successful transition from prison to the community through pre-release and work-release programs. Serving more than 400 people each year, while in the program, each resident is required to be employed (unless restricted by the courts), and must participate in the available support services, including educational programming, GED preparation, individual and group counseling, job search and placement services, substance abuse counseling, and referral to follow-up community services.

The Second Chance Act ensures that the tax dollars on corrections are better spent, and in providing crucial resources is the answer to the "revolving door" of people entering and leaving prison and jail – at a time when they are desperately needed.

Simply put, these efforts not only provide life-changing benefits for the formerly incarcerated individual but also make a direct impact on the safety and vitality of the local community.

Please make the Second Chance Act one of your priorities for FY 2012.

I look forward to your leadership on this very important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [rsnyder@VOAches.org](mailto:rsnyder@VOAches.org) or 240.764.2631. I would be happy to discuss the legislation further or provide you with a tour of our Residential Re-Entry Center, so you can see first-hand how these life-changing programs work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell K. Snyder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Russell K. Snyder  
President and CEO  
Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc.