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December 5, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell,

On behalf of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), a national construction trade association representing more than 27,000 firms including America's leading general contractors, specialty contractors, service providers, and suppliers, I write to you to express support for job training programs, including those geared towards individuals in the criminal justice system. The construction industry struggles to find qualified workers while ex-offenders struggle to find jobs. The FIRST STEP Act helps address this paradigm by including two worthy policy objectives -- increasing job training programs and policy changes to help ex-offenders reenter society.

The construction industry continues to face a national worker shortage. In a recent AGC workforce survey, 80 percent of construction firms reported having a hard time filling craft positions. Expected craft worker retirements, growth in other sectors, and absence of a viable pipeline for recruiting and training new workers have all contributed to this shortage. Meanwhile, construction demand and activity continue to grow.

An estimated one in three American adults has a criminal record of some kind. And, over 600,000 individuals leave the criminal justice system every year looking for work. However, these ex-offenders often find the prospect of gaining employment daunting and intimidating. Providing them with workforce training and preparing them to be career ready before their release can provide numerous benefits.

The workforce shortage has left contractors shifting their hiring perspective as they recruit and fill jobs in the construction industry and there are already successful ex-offender programs tailored toward the construction industry. The policy changes like those in the FIRST STEP Act may bring benefits for hiring employers, ex-offenders, and the nation by addressing some of the worker shortages, reducing recidivism, and improving public safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James V. Christianson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James V. Christianson
Vice President, Government Relations