

December 5, 2018  
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Dear Senator Harris:

I am concerned about mass incarceration. A misguided response to crime in the 80s ushered in Draconian penalties and reduced discretion in sentencing and parole leaving the US thirty years later with among the world's highest incarceration rates. The damage has fallen disproportionately on blacks with the famously divergent rules for powdered and crystalized cocaine eliminating any doubt about intent and the persistent racial differences in wealth, particularly among the poorest, being among the well documented effects. This has long been an issue with some bipartisan appeal and the First Step Act purports to be a move to help. The devil though is in the details and your letter to the Judiciary Committee in May clearly laid out many of the bill's problems such as adding new biases against immigrants. I worry that the desire to pass something and call it prison reform might hinder future efforts. At this point there is about to be a Democratic House majority and Mr Sessions is no longer either on the Judiciary committee or in the Justice Department. This suggests that now is the time to push for real reform bills in the Senate.

*Thank you for taking the lead on sentencing and prison reform .*

I am very proud to be a US resident and a large part of that derives from our just society.

Sincerely,  
Eric Babson