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Newly Passed Criminal Justice Reform is Only the First Step

Joan Neal: "As its name implies, the FIRST STEP ACT is a beginning - a place to begin making our federal criminal justice system more just and humane."

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congress voted to pass criminal justice reform with the FIRST STEP ACT, and **Joan Neal, M.A., Senior Fellow of Government Relations at NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice** issued the following statement:

"While the FIRST STEP ACT offers modest changes, it begins the process of making some much-needed improvements to the federal criminal justice system. The legislation reduces mandatory minimum sentences, gives judges leeway in sentencing, revises the 'good time' credit calculation, improves conditions in federal prisons, and provides additional resources for programs that help folks re-enter society.

"At the same time, some of the provisions fail to go far enough. Many of the sentencing reductions only apply going forward, leaving many in prison under outdated laws. **As its name implies, the FIRST STEP ACT is a beginning - a place to begin making our federal criminal justice system more just and humane.**

"We commend Congress for taking this 'first step' at reform. **Our faith teaches us that redemption and rehabilitation are possible even for people who have committed crimes, and our criminal justice system should reflect that value. This can be the beginning of such transformational change, and we urge President Trump to sign this bill into law."**

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NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice – advocates for justice inspired by Catholic Sisters – educates, organizes, and lobbies for economic and social transformation. They have a 46-year track record of lobbying for critical federal programs that support those at the margins and prioritize the common good. www.networklobby.org