January 31, 2018

Representative Claire Cronin, House Chair, Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Representative Ronald Mariano, House Majority Leader

Representative Sheila Harrington, Ranking Minority Member, Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Senator William Brownsberger, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Senator Cynthia Creem, Assistant Senate Majority Leader

Senator Bruce Tarr, Senate Minority Leader

Dear Members of the House-Senate Conference Committee:

As groups with varied perspectives and experiences on issues relating to the criminal justice system, we are unified in the belief that only comprehensive reform will lower recidivism, reduce incarceration, eliminate racial disparities, reduce barriers to jobs and economic stability, enable more people with addiction issues to receive treatment instead of incarceration, and enable justice reinvestment by putting all the savings into job training.

We are grateful that both branches of the legislature have worked to address this need by passing truly far reaching reform bills.

We also appreciate that this leaves conferees with many challenges. We urge members to resist calls for a shorter or less comprehensive bill and to work through the intricacies of this complex legislation.  To support this endeavor, many of our groups have produced letters with more detailed analysis and recommendations in our respective areas of expertise that have or will be sent to you.

Together, however, we ask that you hold true to the comprehensive nature of the bills passed by both branches by issuing a report that retains provisions that address repeal of mandatory minimum sentences, criminal records/CORI consequences reform, a $1500 felony larceny threshold, diversion programs, including to treatment for addiction, solitary confinement reforms, fees and fines reforms, justice reinvestment to put savings from the bill into job training to improve public safety, compassionate medical release, juvenile justice reforms including expungement, restorative justice, primary caretaker and other sentencing alternatives, and data collection and transparency.

We thank you for your dedication to criminal justice reform and to working collaboratively to ensure that a comprehensive package is signed into law and implemented effectively to the benefit of all citizens of Massachusetts.

We have worked on this legislation with you for several years and are very hopeful that you will produce a bill that furthers justice and safety for all.

Sincerely,

Jobs NOT Jails

ROCA

Committee for Public Counsel Services

Louis D. Brown Peace Institute

Progressive Massachusetts

Prisoners’ Legal Services

NAACP New England Area Conference

Criminal Justice Policy Coalition

Coalition for Social Justice

Greater Boston Interfaith Organization

ACLU Massachusetts

1199SEIU

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

League of Women Voters MA

SEIU 888

Indivisible Somerville

Coalition for Effective Public Safety

NASW-MA

MassINC

Coalition for Juvenile Justice

Community Resources for Justice

MA Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR)

Actual Justice Team, MA Conference of United Church of Christ

EPOCA

Greater Boston Legal Services CORI & Re-entry Project

Committee for Effective Public Safety

NASW-MA

Mass Incarceration Working Group of the First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

SEIU 509

#StuckOnReplay

Massachusetts Bail Fund

Unitarian Universalist Mass Action Network and End Mass Incarceration Together (EMIT)

United Teen Equality Center (UTEC)

Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement

Essex County Community Organization

Pioneer Valley Project

I Have a Future

Massachusetts Communities Action Network

cc Speaker Robert DeLeo

cc Senate President Harriette Chandler

cc Representative Jeffrey Sanchez, Chair of House Ways and Means Committee

cc Senator Karen Spilka, Chair of Senate Ways and Means Committee