



**For Immediate Release**

May 30, 2018

**Media Contact:**

[justicelanow@gmail.com](mailto:justicelanow@gmail.com)

## **Statement: JusticeLA Opposes FIRST STEP Act**

LOS ANGELES, CA - JusticeLA, a coalition of community organizations working with directly impacted communities affected by incarceration, has joined the chorus of organizations nationwide in opposing the [FIRST STEP Act](#).

“Last week, the House of Representatives passed harmful legislation masked as a “criminal justice” bill. As a coalition that advocates for the rights of communities targeted by the prison system, JusticeLA vehemently opposes H.R. 5682 also referred to as the FIRST STEP Act.

“We oppose the FIRST STEP Act because it dehumanizes and criminalizes our communities. The First Step Act further invests in structural racism through the use of risk assessments, extensive carve-outs of vulnerable populations, with a false promise of earned credit for those who qualify. The bill opens the door to privatization, e-carceration and anti-immigrant policy.

“Although immigration and drug offenses account for over 50% of the total federal prison population, the FIRST STEP Act excludes the majority of these populations. The bill specifically excludes those with more serious criminal convictions and deportable or inadmissible immigrants from benefitting from these programs. To discard this vulnerable population in the interest of a political victory is a violation of the principles that we stand for.

America’s criminal justice system continues to be built on anti-Blackness and causes disproportionately harm to Black and brown people, including queer and trans people and immigrants and people of all economic classes--including white people. What’s more, the tools

in this bill would be handed over to U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who works consistently to harm our communities.

“Sessions has [demonized](#) and threatened Black activists fighting to dismantle structural racism. Through his [policies](#), he has caused immediate harm to Black people and all people of color, including immigrants.

“The FIRST STEP Act would do little to reform prisons or the federal court system that can’t already be done under current laws. The bill excludes necessary funding for recidivism reduction programming and fails to safeguard savings from ending up in the hands of law enforcement. The FIRST STEP Act also fails to address the need for sentencing reform so that America can begin to address the over-policing and criminalization of the communities this bill excludes. Without sentencing reform, meaningful prison reform is nullified.

“In conclusion, the FIRST STEP Act is not real prison reform, and it is especially not prison reform proportionate to the strength and sacrifice of the directly impacted people who have built this movement. The broad bipartisan support the movement for criminal justice reform now enjoys is the product of far-reaching generational harm. To discard an entire population of people in the interest of a political victory is a violation of the principles that we stand for.”

###

**JusticeLA**, in partnership with community organizations working with directly impacted communities affected by incarceration, was formed to reclaim, reimagine and reinvest what L.A. County could do with the \$3.5 billion allocated to building two new jails. JusticeLA was formed by Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter and anchor organizations: Californians United for Responsible Budget (CURB), Community Coalition, Critical Resistance L.A., Dignity and Power Now, Immigrant Youth Coalition, JustLeadershipUSA, Revolve Impact, TransLatina Coalition and Youth Justice Coalition. [JusticeLANow.org](http://JusticeLANow.org).