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September 15, 2004

The Honorable Robert C. Scott
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Scott:

I am writing to express the American Bar Association's support for your legislation that would amend title 18 to award credit toward the service of a sentence to prisoners who participate in designated educational, vocational, treatment or other developmental programs.

H.R. 4752, the proposed "Literacy, Education, and Rehabilitation Act," would facilitate the successful reentry of offenders into the community. Providing incentives to prisoners to actively participate in education and treatment programs is an important step in helping prisoners develop the occupational and life skills they need to become productive citizens after release. Several recent studies have demonstrated, for example, that prison drug treatment programs can reduce substance abuse and arrests after release.

Last year, ABA President Dennis Archer established the ABA Justice Kennedy Commission to respond to the challenge issued by Justice Anthony Kennedy in his speech to the ABA Annual Meeting in August of 2003. Justice Kennedy called upon the lawyers of the nation to concern themselves about the "inadequacies – and the injustices – in our prison and correctional systems."

The Kennedy Commission's recommendations, which lay out a broad agenda for reform of the criminal justice and correctional systems, were adopted by our House of Delegates last month. A key recommendation of the Commission is that jurisdictions must prepare prisoners for their release into the community beginning from the time they first report to prison, including but not limited to substance abuse treatment, educational and job training opportunities, and mental health counseling and treatment. Prisoner participation in such programs should be encouraged by giving credit toward satisfaction of sentences for successful completion of such programs.

The ABA applauds your leadership in developing this important legislation and urges its enactment.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Evans

cc: Members, House Committee on the Judiciary