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JOINT RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING APRIL 2017 AS SECOND CHANCE MONTH

WHEREAS, every person is endowed with human dignity and value; and

WHEREAS, redemption and second chances are American values; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 65 million American citizens have a criminal record; and

WHEREAS, individuals returning from prison and those who have paid their debts after committing a crime face a "second prison" of stigma and obstacles, also known as collateral consequences; and

WHEREAS, individuals with criminal histories encounter significant barriers such as an inability to find housing, employment or education, regain voting rights, volunteer in their communities, secure identification documentation and pay off substantial financial debt accrued as a result of conviction and incarceration; and

WHEREAS, these barriers can contribute to recidivism, which increases victimization, decreases public safety and results in lost human capital and economic output for communities; and

WHEREAS, the designation of April as Second Chance Month can contribute to increased public awareness about the "second prison," the need for closure for those who have paid their debts and opportunities for individuals, employers, congregations and communities to extend second chances; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Legislature now assembled in the First Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize April 2017 as Second Chance Month, and we urge citizens to observe this month through actions and programs that promote awareness of the "second prison" and provide closure for those who have paid their debts.