88R23655 BK-D

By:  J. Johnson of Harris H.R. No. 1177

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, April 2023 has been recognized by presidential proclamation as Second Chance Month to honor those who have successfully reentered society after being incarcerated and to pay tribute to the community groups, faith-based organizations, and employers that are helping to reduce recidivism among former inmates; and

WHEREAS, Individuals who have been incarcerated face significant barriers in returning to life outside of a detention facility; those who have successfully made that transition are worthy of recognition, not only because of the challenges they have overcome but also because of the positive example they provide to others who are walking the same path; and

WHEREAS, The State of Texas is home to many men and women who have transcended their troubled pasts to become productive citizens; among their numbers are Maggie Luna and Jennifer Toon, who are helping to make a difference in the lives of others who have faced obstacles following reentry; and

WHEREAS, Since her release from prison, Maggie Luna has dedicated herself to empowering, organizing, and mobilizing others at the state and local levels to enact meaningful change for inmates and formerly incarcerated individuals, which she has accomplished chiefly through her work as head of the Statewide Leadership Council; through her advocacy and leadership, she also played a pivotal role in saving the life of death row inmate Melissa Lucio, who was granted a stay of execution by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in April 2022; Ms. Luna is an alumna of JustLeadershipUSA, and she currently serves on the community advisory council of the Texas After Violence Project, a criminal justice reform group; and

WHEREAS, After serving two decades in prison, beginning at the age of 15, Jennifer Toon has become a statewide policy expert and a leader in justice reform for incarcerated and returning women, children, and people with disabilities; she is the founder of the Lioness Justice Impacted Women's Alliance, and she currently serves as head of Finish the 5, a campaign to close youth prisons in Texas, and as a community advisor for the Texas After Violence Project; and

WHEREAS, Many more individuals throughout our state have likewise emerged from the criminal justice system to realize meaningful goals in a broad range of endeavors, and their experiences offer a moving testament to the human potential for redemption; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 88th Texas Legislature hereby recognize April 2023 as Second Chance Month, honor Maggie Luna and Jennifer Toon for their contributions as activists for criminal justice reform and rehabilitation, and commend those organizations and individuals who are assisting former inmates in reintegrating into society.