

MOTIVATE MICHIGAN

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REPEAL

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WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS MONTH

- Women's Empowerment BreakfastSaturday, December 7
- Great Righteous Redeeming Food & Clothing Drive.....Saturday, December 7
- Motivate Michigan Monthly Phone Call..... Tuesday, December 10
- Monthly Criminal Justice Reform Forum Meeting Tuesday, January 28

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DECEMBER 2019 | @PRISONERLED | ISSUE 3

Impacted-Led Coalition Launch Statewide Agenda to End Mass Incarceration in Michigan



Amani Sawari | September 25, 2019 | sawarimi.org

After decades of over sentencing and mass incarceration plaguing Michiganians, community members are taking the problem of Michigan's criminal legal system back into their hands, the way it always should have been. At this point the state of Michigan's Department of Corrections is so far behind that of so many states in the process of transitioning from being over punitive to rehabilitative that community members are fed up with elected officials dragging their feet. With the recent election of Governor Gretchen Whitmer many residents saw hope for Michigan's criminal legal

system, assuming that perhaps she might be more accessible to community stakeholders.

Governor's Task Force Falls Short, Community Organizers Fill the Gap

Sadly, we've been disappointed. With the development of the Governor's task force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration, hope was restored to some while others saw that the executive order fell short. We expected that this would be a coalition of stakeholders with the authority to implement change, but with the recent update from the task force being that they are in the process of searching for ideas, citizens are outraged. How is it that the governor could create a task force to think of ideas when countless ideas already exist within the community? We are far beyond ideas, at this point we need implementation. The governor's failure to do so places the responsibility into our hands.

This past week Michigan Liberation, a grassroots, impacted-led non-profit organization, held a statewide eight-issue agenda launch event in celebration of the completion of their community-led statewide agenda to "liberate Michigan" through the transformation our criminal legal system. The agenda goes beyond simply asking for reforms and makes concrete long-overdue demands under the following themes: Freedom for Our Children to Thrive, Community-Determined Public Safety, Care Not Criminalization, Innocent until Proven Otherwise, Sentencing and the Right to Redemption, End Prison Slavery, Rebuilding Life After Incarceration, and Justice for Wrongful Convictions within the Vision for a Liberated Michigan. Michigan Liberation's staff have been working for over a year to identify the holes in our criminal justice system



and opened up their doors to the public in order to collaborate with as many community members as possible in developing solutions. Michigan Liberation's agenda builders have successfully developed on a wholistic plan attacking all areas of Corrections from policing and juvenile detention to prison conditions and re-entry while Gretchen Whitmer has spent the entire year focused solely on one aspect of our criminal legal system, pretrial sentencing and jail.

Michigan Liberation Prepares for 2020 Prosecutor Election

The coalition being led by Michigan Liberation has prepared their agenda in time to establish a statewide campaign for the upcoming prosecutors election in 2020. We've identified the tremendous amount of unchecked power that a single prosecutor holds over their county to over sentence, plea-bargain, or drop charges on individuals. We've realized that our current prosecutors in Wayne, Washtenaw and Oakland counties especially have done little to nothing to serve our interests, and have actually worked against the interests of the community to decarcerate for decades. Looking at the state of our prisons it's obvious that our County prosecutors are over using criminal courts and over sentencing thousands of individuals. Over the past couple years legislation has tried to do its part in rectifying these issues with the passing of Raise the Age and the release of dozens of juvenile lifers, elected officials in Congress are doing what they can to rectify the deep harms that prosecutors have incited, but that simply isn't enough. We cannot depend on legislation to be passed in order to rectify our wrongs we must be proactive in working with elected officials who have community interests at heart and elect candidates that will serve those interest from the beginning. This will be more effective in the long term rather than trying to clean up a mess of prosecutors that aren't committed to their community.



Amani Sawari speaks about the need to abolish Mandatory Minimums

If you haven't yet, it is not at all too late to join Michigan Liberation in their campaign for a liberated Michigan. We need your support for not only raising awareness about what the agenda demands are but by also inquiring of candidates on their positions on these demands as we move into the election season. We also need your support for the individual campaigns within the agenda such as the Good-Time campaign for which canvassing help will be needed after the new year along with the call to end life without the possibility of parole or natural life sentences. It's essential that if you want to see any of these demands come into fruition in Michigan, that you be a part of making it happen. We are living in a historic moment with the rare opportunity for a corrections department overhaul. We can transform Michigan from being the least of the states with destitute, overcrowded prisons that have little to no programming to being a leader in our nation. We have that chance and the agenda has been set so now as we look as we call on our elected officials will look to our people to uphold the responsibility of holding our elected officials accountable.—

Michigan Jail and Pretrial Incarceration Task Force prepares to issue ideas for change

Mikenzie Frost | November 20, 2019 | upnorthlive.com



Jail and Pretrial Task Force meeting held in Lansing on Tuesday, November 19, 2019. (Mikenzie Frost)

LANSING, Mich. — The cost of incarceration includes the monetary amount and the impacts to communities across Michigan and the latest task force created to study areas of improvement is getting closer to announcing recommendations.

The Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration is a 21-member group led by Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist and Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Bridget McCormack that was created after an executive order from Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in April. The group traveled around the state since holding listening sessions to gauge areas of concern from people impacted by the criminal justice system.

“We’ve been hearing that there is a desperate need to reform our county jail system. We’ve been hearing from people all around the state, talking about their negative experiences, talking about themselves or their family members being locked up when they really needed substance abuse support or being locked up when they really needed mental health services,” Gilchrist said. “We’ve been hearing from people who want to see a justice system that has more tools in the tool box than just putting people in jail.”

The task force is considering changes surrounding the areas of arrest and arrest diversion, pre-trial and post-convictions. Some of the recommendations being talked about during the meeting in Lansing Tuesday included more mental health resources – for both the inmate and the officers working directly with the people involved – more resources for victim advocacy and services, changes to the laws surrounding warrant jurisdiction and increasing uniformity when it comes to implementing parole and other alternatives.

“You have to think about the human cost and human impact. People who are not getting the services they need in the right way from the right places, they’re not actually being rehabilitated to be their best selves in society,” Gilchrist said. Data from Pew Research Center showed Michigan is currently at a 50-year low crime rate but the jail population has nearly tripled since 1970.

"I was surprised at the increase in jail populations in our rural jails while urban jails have actually decreased in their jail populations. I was fascinated that the number of women and older adult population in jail has grown," McCormack said.

The data also showed that Michigan's arrests have fallen by about 20% over the last 10 years, but a relative small number of people drive the population in county jails. The cost of an inadequate criminal justice system is a price Michigan taxpayers cost whether they are involved in the criminal justice system or not, Gilchrist said.

"There's also just a straight up economic cost. The cost to run and administer those are the second or third highest ranking budget expenditures for most counties in the state of Michigan," Gilchrist said. "If we can use those funds in a smarter way to better serve people and better use county resources, these decisions that we need to get."

The official recommendations from the task force won't be published until January and some will need the Legislature to spark statutory changes. McCormack said the research clearly shows some of the areas that will need more focus and attention that are impacting each step along the criminal justice system.

"We've seen overwhelmingly that mental illness is playing a big role in serving time in jail as well as substance abuse and so some of the recommendations are going to involve figuring out whether jail is the best place to deal with those problems or are there better ways," McCormack said. —

Does the michigan Prison System Really Work?

The Michigan Department of Corrections has failed our citizens, taxpayers and offenders. So, what is the function of the (MDOC)?

Eddie Treadwell | November 7, 2019 | Lakeland CF



Through my research I found that the general public is not aware of what goes on behind prison walls, nor are they clear about what correctional institutions should be accomplishing. But everyone is concerned when prison fail to "rehabilitate" offenders. Society has recognized the futility of achieving long term behavioral changes. So, consequently, it has left corrections institutions with a incapacitate mandate. This compromise has created more of a realistic mission for corrections but a less optimistic outlook for the offender.

The (MDOC) seems to be satisfied with just simply preventing further criminal activity, not so much in the future, as with deterrence but, during the period when an offender is incarcerated. It don't change the individual behavior, to just prevent them from praying on the public during there incarceration. This approach cost taxpayers \$2 billion dollar annually to house our prisoners without directing the financial resources towards crime prevention programs as a society our views differ when it comes to dealing with criminal behavior. Public opinion concerning the right response to crime make clear the purpose of corrections that is, what corrections is supposed to be accomplishing. What should be done with law violators? It is impossible to identify any one mission or goal of corrections.

At various times, corrections has been charged with fulfilling society's demand for retribution, deterrence, incapacitate, rehabilitation and reintegration. However, the prison population continue to grow out of control due to its get touch on crime policies directed towards the under-class citizens in our inner cities. Many inmates come to prison with similar backgrounds that was economically deprived, culturally disadvantaged, and or educationally deficient. Substance abuse and mental illness, these are driving factors that contribute to leading our citizens straight to prison.

We need to invest more in education, drug treatment programs in our communities and provide meaningful employment opportunities for our inner city residence. Now, once incarcerated the prison system should offer an incentive such as "good time credits" that will reduce prisoners sentences by following the rules of the institution and by participating in various programs that is offered by the facility to enhance the inmates work habits, pride, dignity, self-esteem, sense of accomplishment, and feeling of self-worth. In fact, it has been found that such an approach has contributed a great deal to the rehabilitative process of prisoners in other states.

Our current system of imprisonment represents more an obstacle to overcome, than an opportunity to reform. It may simply be illogical to expect corrections to change behavior, given the incongruity of trying to teach offenders to adjust to society by removing them from it. a broader array of treatment alternatives would present a greater potential for meeting the needs of any particular person. In other words, the correctional process must be directed towards changing behavior rather than just containing behavior. We as a society must do better when it comes to correcting the behavior of our incarcerated men and women of this great state of Michigan. If you have any comments or suggestion please contact me at Patch.com or on facebook. —

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These are the NATIONAL DEMANDS of the men and women in federal, immigration and state prisons:

1. Immediate improvements to the conditions of prisons and prison policies that recognize the humanity of imprisoned men and women.
2. An immediate end to prison slavery. All persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction must be paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.
3. Rescission of the Prison Litigation Reform Act, allowing imprisoned humans a proper channel to address grievances and violations of their rights.
4. Rescission of the Truth in Sentencing Act and the Sentencing Reform Act so that imprisoned humans have a possibility of rehabilitation and parole. No human shall be sentenced to death by incarceration or serve any sentence without the possibility of parole.
5. An immediate end to the racial overcharging, over-sentencing and parole denials of Black and brown humans. Black humans shall no longer be denied parole because the victim of the crime was white, which is a particular problem in Southern states.
6. An immediate end to racist gang enhancement laws targeting Black and Brown humans.
7. No denial of access to rehabilitation programs for imprisoned humans at their place of detention because of their label as a violent offender.
8. State prisons must be funded specifically to offer more rehabilitation services.
9. Reinstatement of Pell grant eligibility to prisoners in all US states and territories.
10. Recognition of voting rights for all confined citizens serving prison sentences, pretrial detainees and so-called "ex-felons." Their votes must be counted. Representation is demanded. All voices count!