

CAPPS UPDATE

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Hello and goodbye!

We welcomed **John Cooper** as our new policy director on April 17. You'll learn more about John in our next issue.

Herasanna Richards, recently accepted a new position in Detroit. We wish her well and look forward to working with her as a volunteer.



In May, Pastor Greg Delaney and Dr. Teresa Boles visited CAPPs and shared information on the Nehemiah House Community in Highland Park, Michigan. Pictured left to right: Laura Sager, Pastor Greg Delaney, Dr. Teresa Boles, and Herasanna Richards.

Legislation

Law & Justice Committee hosts hearings on criminal justice reform

The House of Representatives Law and Justice Committee is hosting a series of hearings on "safe and secure rehabilitation" and criminal justice reform. The committee is chaired by Rep. Klint Kesto (R-District 39) with Rep. Peter Lucido (R-District 36) serving as vice chair.

Hearings are expected to continue over the summer in different locations across the State. The House is exploring reforms that can address a range of issues related to incarceration (see inside). CAPPs has been working closely with Chairman Kesto and other legislators to develop reform proposals for consideration this fall.

We'll continue to keep you informed via the newsletter and your families informed via our electronic newsletter. Please encourage your loved ones to sign up for the on-line newsletter by emailing capps@capps-mi.org or calling our office.

Conservative, crime survivor organization leaders call on Michigan to continue criminal justice reforms



Lenore Anderson, president of the Alliance for Safety and Justice, testifies before the House Law and Justice Committee.

On April 25, Rep. Klint Kesto (R-District 39) heard testimony from national leaders calling for continued criminal justice reforms and investment in services that prevent crime and help crime survivors heal.

Mark Holden, senior vice president and general counsel of Koch Industries, called on Michigan to continue its efforts to reduce the prison population. He noted that conservatives support policies that are “more fair, effective and just.” Holden stated:

At the end of the day the phrases tough on crime and soft on crime are largely meaningless. We need to be “smart on crime and soft on taxpayers” through data-driven, evidence-based solutions and not . . . fear and emotion.

Marc Levin, policy director of Right on Crime, a national organization of conservative leaders and lawmakers supporting federal and state criminal justice reform, encouraged lawmakers to rethink parole policies. He supported previous efforts to release low-risk people serving terms of years after they had served their sentences, saying:

There has to be a substantial and compelling interest to keep somebody after they have served their minimum (sentences). Currently the parole board . . . continues to keep a number of those people behind bars, even if they are shown to be at a very low risk of recidivating.

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WHAT CRIME SURVIVORS NEED AND WANT

Lenore Anderson, president of the Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ), a national organization of crime survivors, discussed the need for a balanced approach to criminal justice that prioritizes prevention, rehabilitation, and accountability. She emphasized that:

Outdated and lopsided public safety strategies that focused mostly on lengthy sentences and increased incarceration have failed to provide an effective approach to public safety.

Anderson urged the Committee to pursue a criminal justice system “where we support crime victims, address the drivers of crime, and reduce recidivism.”

She testified about findings of an Alliance for Safety and Justice national survey. The survey found that the overwhelming majority of crime survivors support investments in treatment, rehabilitation, and services to help crime survivors heal.

Six in 10 victims prefer shorter prison sentences and more spending on prevention and rehabilitation rather than prison sentences that keep people incarcerated for as long as possible.

Dionne Wilson, ASJ national crime survivor advocate, provided gripping testimony about her experience as the widow of a police officer who lost his life in the line of duty. She shared her personal journey of healing and learning which led her to supporting new safety priorities over tough on crime policies, and concluded by saying:

The whole tough on crime era has failed . . . What is wrong is ignoring the results of that and staying with the status quo. Real leadership looks like acknowledging what has failed and changing it. It is ok to get it wrong, as long as when we realize it we take steps to get it right.

CAPPS outlines path to reducing prison population at House hearing

On May 2, Barbara Levine, CAPPS associate director, and John Cooper, CAPPS policy director, testified at the invitation of the chair, Rep. Kesto (R – District 39). Cooper identified the policies that fueled Michigan’s prison growth over recent decades.

Michigan currently incarcerates about 41,000 individuals at a cost of nearly \$2 billion dollars annually. He explained that the size of the prison population is determined by our policy choices, not crime rates. Crime rates have fallen steadily in recent decades. Over the last four decades, sentencing and parole policies have been driven more by myths and fear than smart, evidence-based policies. Further, Cooper noted:

It is now apparent that prison-centered criminal justice policy has been a costly failure. We need a new, evidence-based, approach to public safety.

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Levine then outlined the key sentencing and parole reforms recommended in CAPP's 2015 report, *10,000 fewer prisoners: Strategies to reach the goal*, that provides a roadmap for safely reducing the prison population, thus corrections spending. Recommendations included parole reforms including clarifying the standard for parole denials and modifying the parole process for parolable lifers. She emphasized that:

All of the options in our report are rooted in history, experience, and research. In fact, many are conservative in the truest sense – they would restore policies that were in effect in the past.

Levine stressed keeping low-risk prisoners behind bars once they have served their minimum sentence is a costly burden to taxpayers, without any public safety payoff.

Kyle Kaminski, Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) legislative liaison, provided testimony about the effectiveness of rehabilitation, saying:

The (MDOC) Vocational Village shows that if you provide an opportunity to incarcerated individuals you will see positive results. We need more opportunities for incarcerated individuals.

Kaminski described the MDOC Offender Success Model, an evidence-based approach to prepare individuals for a structured reentry process that supports safe and healthy communities.

He then outlined Michigan's five-year prison population projections, noting that there will be a small decline over the next couple of years but the population will then plateau. Kaminski advised the Committee to consider the impact the legislature has on the prison population. He said:

Policy makers can have an impact if they are serious about reform. There is only so much that the MDOC can do to reduce the population.

Business leaders call for reforms: We want to hire more parolees

At the May 9 House Law and Justice Committee, representatives of Cascade Engineering, Abcor Industries, Mercy/Trinity Health, Business Leaders for Michigan and Talent 2025 discussed the need to increase the available workforce and to remove barriers to employment.

Kevin Stotts, president of Talent 2025 representing over 100 CEOs, is working to make West Michigan a top 20 employment region by 2025 by ensuring there is an ongoing supply of world-class talent.

Stotts noted that Michigan has a tight labor market with an unemployment rate of just 3.4 percent. Employers are starved for good employees and formerly incarcerated individuals offer an opportunity to meet the talent needs in the region and across the state.

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CITIZENS ALLIANCE ON PRISONS AND PUBLIC SPENDING

Over 200 employers in the region currently hire returning citizens and, said Stotts, a criminal record does not hinder a person's ability to be successful on the job. In fact:

CEOs whose companies hire returning citizens note these employees are dedicated, conscientious, and successful, often outperforming their peers without a criminal background.

Stotts strongly recommended that the state fund more job training and placement services prior to release, saying:

Promoting smart reintegration back into society and into the workforce while advancing public safety is good for everyone: employers, individuals with a criminal background, and our communities.

Businesses discussed their internal policies aimed at increasing employment opportunities for parolees. Kenyatta Brame, executive vice president of Cascade Engineering, a manufacturing company in Grand Rapids, explained his company does not inquire about criminal records until an individual is engaged in the employment process. This business practice stems from a belief in second chances and redemption. He said:

We know that employment opportunities reduce recidivism and help keep families together. And when we are successful as a community employing returning citizens, it allows us to spend our state and federal funds on programs other than corrections. This is a win, win, win: a win for business, our community, and for our employees.

Mark Miller, president of Cascade Engineering, told the Committee that hiring returning citizens is **good for our business and we have been successful as a result.**

He urged the Committee members to invest in vocational and "soft skill" training for the returning citizen population. Soft skills, such as communications, problem solving and time management skills, help people succeed in the workplace.

JT Weis, CEO of Abcor Industries, a producer of sustainable wood products in Holland, testified that 50 percent of his staff were formerly incarcerated. Many of his employees are sex offenders who are often perceived as the "worst of the worst." Weis said:

The truth is the folks who come out of the MDOC after 10, 12, and 14 years are the ones that are the most loyal, productive, and ready to grow.

Weis relies on a community-based organization, 70x7 Life Recovery, to support his employees with reentry services such as transportation, mentoring, and housing. He strongly recommended investing in these critical community-based services for parolees and expanding of MDOC's Vocational Village program. The Vocational Village is a skilled training program offering career and technical education. Michigan currently has one Vocational Village at the Richard A. Handlon Correction Facility in Ionia.

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Kenyatta Brame, vice president of Cascade Engineering, left, and Mark Miller, president of Cascade Engineering, right.

John Schwartz, regional vice president at Mercy and Trinity Health, said the health care field is subject to strict regulations. Under current law, individuals convicted of certain crimes can be prohibited from employment for up to 15 years – long after they complete probation. Schwartz noted that this reduces the available workforce for the health care industry.

Schwartz urged the Committee to consider amendments to statutes that present barriers to work, stating:

We all have to recognize that to err is human. People make mistakes and it does not necessarily make them bad people . . . Patients are not at risk because somebody makes a mistake outside of the workplace. . .

What we are asking is that you allow us as an employer to make some of those determinations on our own. We suggest that we are capable of doing that. We have systems and wraparound services and we do thorough testing before and during employment so that we are ensuring we are providing our patients a safe environment.

Tim Sowton, vice president of government affairs and public policy for Business Leaders of Michigan, a statewide roundtable of 80 business leaders, testified about the importance of investing in services that would increase the labor pool in Michigan, saying:

Talent is one of the most important factors when business leaders are deciding to expand or locate their business. Our interest in smart criminal justice reform is related to how the state is budgeting and its priorities. We are spending about two billion dollars out of the general fund on corrections. That is \$700 million more than on our public universities . . . This is money we think would be better spent on areas such as higher education and a skilled trades fund.

Law and Justice Committee hears testimony on how to reduce the number of mentally ill in prisons

On May 23, the House Law and Justice Committee heard testimony on how to reduce the number of mentally ill in prison.

Judge Milton L. Mack, Jr., state court administrator, State Court Administrative Office, offered recommendations to improve the mental health system. Mack began his testimony by stressing that mental illness is treatable, recovery is possible, and persons with serious mental illnesses can lead productive and satisfying lives.

According to Mack, individuals suffering from serious mental illness comprise 23 percent of Michigan's prison system. However, Michigan's mental health code does not promote early intervention. Mack said:

For many of our citizens, our mental health system is hopelessly outdated and ineffective. The evidence is everywhere. Our jails and prisons are overflowing with people because they were unable to obtain timely treatment for their mental illnesses.

Countless others are homeless or suffer state-imposed impoverishment in order to maintain eligibility for mental health care. Other victims of our broken mental health system include actual victims of avoidable crimes and frustrated, burned out family members.

Mack pointed to assisted outpatient therapies (AOT) as one early intervention strategy that promotes recovery.

AOT is a practice of delivering outpatient treatment under court order that has proven effective at increasing medication adherence, reducing hospital readmission, and promoting recovery. Mack recommended that AOT to be a part of the release plans from hospitals, jails, and prisons. He indicated this would reduce the cycle back into the system for individuals with mental illness.

Steven Mays, diversion administrator, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, outlined the purpose and work of the Mental Health Diversion Council. The Council, an advisory body to the governor, is working to create an action plan to divert individuals with mental illness out of criminal justice involvement and into appropriate treatment.

The overarching goals of the Council are to strengthen pre-booking jail diversion and expand post-booking services for individuals with mental illness, ensure quality behavioral health treatment in correctional facilities, reduce unnecessary incarceration, and establish a coordinated system to facilitate systems change.

The Council is implementing 11 pilot programs to connect with people with mental illness prior to any criminal justice system involvement and extending through parole and probation.

Crime survivors want investments in trauma services

On May 30, House Law and Justice Committee chair, heard additional testimony from Michigan crime survivors calling for investments in systems that help crime survivors heal and create safe communities.

Aswad Thomas provided powerful testimony about his experience as a crime survivor. He grew up playing basketball in Detroit. In 2009, he prepared to play professional basketball in Europe after his college graduation. His life suddenly changed course, when he was shot twice in the back while leaving a convenience store in Connecticut.

Thomas was not offered services after release from the hospital that would help him adjust to the loss of his career or address the trauma of being shot. He said he lost forty friends to gun violence.

He urged the Committee to invest in critical crime survivor services, saying:

Too many survivors of crime never receive the care and support they need. We have a tremendous opportunity to invest in communities most impacted by crime and violence to prevent crime from happening in the first place.

Thomas now the National Organizing Director for the Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ). ASJ is a national organization of crime survivors and CAPP's partner. Together ASJ and CAPP advocate for new safety priorities by advancing policies that help communities most harmed by crime and violence.

Thomas uses his life experiences and those of other crime survivors he works with to inform his criminal justice policy recommendations. He closed his testimony saying:

We must invest in serving survivors, prevention, and recovery, rather than incarceration. What we invest in grows. Let's invest in new safety priorities that create stronger and healthier communities across the state of Michigan.

Shari Ware, founder of Still Standing Against Domestic Violence and a survivor of domestic violence, called for more trauma-informed services. Still Standing is a nonprofit organization serving men, women, and children affected by domestic violence through education, prevention, and awareness.

The Detroit-based nonprofit also facilitates a batterer's intervention program, RedeeMEd, which provides an educational environment to help batterers identify and acknowledge their use of violence. The 26th District Court in Detroit refers batterers to RedeeMEd.

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Shari Ware, the founder of Still Standing Against Domestic Violence, testifies before the House Law and Justice Committee.

Ware emphasized the importance of addressing the roots of the domestic violence.

RedeemEd asks program participants to relearn, rebuild, and replace every negative action, word, thought, and deed that they have exhibited in their lifetime.

Over the decade the program has operated, Ware learned batterers are also victims, saying:

They also have suffered the same kind of trauma that women and children have suffered at the hands of someone who said that they loved them.

Ware told Committee members "it is critical to implement a trauma-informed care system." She said:

We need an organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. Trauma-informed care emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both consumers and providers.

A trauma-informed care model is an investment in the community. The model creates a system to support crime victims and reduce recidivism by addressing the drivers of crime. Outlining the lasting effects of untreated trauma on a community, Ware said:

We believe trauma-informed care is important because everyone pays a price when a community produces multi-generations of people with untreated trauma through an increase in crime, loss of wages, and a threat to family stability.

AFSC testifies about seriously and persistently mentally ill in prison

On June 6, Natalie Holbrook, program director of the American Friends Service Committee's (AFSC) Michigan Criminal Justice Program, testified before the House Law and Justice Committee members about the difficulty in reducing the number of mentally ill prisoners in prison and provided reform recommendations. The AFSC focuses on reducing Michigan's prison population through individual advocacy and casework with prisoners building toward systemic change efforts. Holbrook said:

We need robust services that start inside [prison] and accompany people back to the community. We cannot talk about diversion without also investigating and funding in-prison treatment and re-entry treatment and housing.

In February 2016 there were 9,400 people with mental illness incarcerated in Michigan's prison system. Approximately 50 percent of these individuals have serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and psychosis. Echoing the need for early intervention strategies, Holbrook said:

Many people who have struggled with mental illness in their communities are left without safety nets to help them cope with their illnesses and therefore may find themselves having more interactions with law enforcement and eventually the criminal courts.

See her recommendations at: <http://2015capps.capps-mi.org/2017/06/afsc-testifies-about-seriously-and-persistently-mentally-ill-in-prison/>

Media

Focus on rehabilitation in prison

By Aswad Thomas, national organizer for the Alliance for Safety and Justice
The Detroit News op-ed published May 29, 2017
(Excerpt only)

"Too many survivors of crime never receive the care and support they need, and as a result, they fall into the same cycle. The pain and anger caused by trauma can cause people to lash out, all too often perpetuating the cycle of violence that rips apart communities, like my own neighborhood in Highland Park.

When I lost my best friend, there were no social workers around and I had never heard of therapy. Decades later, many victims still aren't getting access to the services they need, and Michigan isn't adequately investing in prevention.

Michigan wastes millions of dollars keeping people who could safely return to their families and communities behind bars. Research shows that simply keeping people in prison longer does not keep us safer.



Aswad Thomas testifies before the Law and Justice Committee.

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CITIZENS ALLIANCE ON PRISONS AND PUBLIC SPENDING

Investing in preventive programs to stop crime from happening in the first place, helping victims and their families heal after a crime has occurred, and helping people rebuild their lives is what will ultimately make our communities safer. The number one priority for victims is making sure that what happened to them never happens to anyone else. And the vast majority of crime survivors support shorter prison sentences and increased investment in prevention and rehabilitation including education, mental health treatment, drug treatment and job training.

The real answer to promote safety in our communities is cost-effective, evidence-based policies that focus on reducing recidivism and expanding access to rehabilitation and community programs. By reforming Michigan's prison system, we can help survivors heal and make our communities safer."

Ask friends and family to visit the CAPPs website at <http://2015capps.capps-mi.org/2017/05/the-detroit-news-column-focus-on-rehabilitation-in-prison/> for the full article

How to cut corrections

Michigan Radio

By Jack Lessenberry

Published May 19, 2017 (Excerpt only)

"We are focused on saving money," [Chris] Gautz [MDOC spokesperson] told me, insisting that "we want fewer prisoners so that we can close prisons." Two things he does support that would provide real results are presumptive parole, which would speed up the release time of well-behaved prisoners who had served their minimum sentences. . .

Finding a way to release several hundred elderly prisoners, whose medical care is costing the department huge sums, would make sense too, but as he said "We can't do that without legislation."

Ask friends and family to visit the CAPPs website at <http://2015capps.capps-mi.org/2017/05/mdoc-supports-safe-and-smart-parole-reform-releasing-elderly-prisoners/> for the full article

Outreach

Screening and Discussion of Pathways to Prisons

On May 3, Detroit Public TV (DPTV) invited Barbara Levine, associate director, to speak at the screening and discussion of DPTV's One Detroit special, Pathways to Prison. The evening began with a screening of the one-hour documentary.

The event concluded with a panel discussion featuring five panelists including Levine. The other panelists included Sen. John Proos - (R-St. Joseph), Rep. David LaGrand (D-Grand Rapids), Justice Bridget Mary McCormack - Michigan Supreme Court Justice, and Yusef Bunchy Shakur - Founder & CEO of YBS Consulting.



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WE MOVED!

Beginning July 1, our office will be located at 222 West Genesee Street Lansing, MI 48933. The telephone number, (517) 482-7753, is the same.

SAVE THE DATE, CAPPS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING!

Save the date, CAPPS Annual Membership Meeting! CAPPS's signature event, the Annual Membership Meeting, is scheduled for Nov. 2, 2017 at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing. The event attracts hundreds of people – a mix of business leaders, lawmakers, advocates, crime survivors, faith-based groups, families of the incarcerated people, lobbyists, MDOC staff, the media, and funders.

People from Grand Rapids to Detroit and across the political spectrum gather to share, learn, and network. The event will include Board elections, speakers, and a buffet dinner. We are planning an exciting event with more details to come! Please encourage friends and family to sign up for our electronic newsletter to receive further details.

Your friends, family, and networks can contact capps@capps-mi.org to request full articles and publications referenced in the newsletter.