

# Update from Safe & Just Michigan

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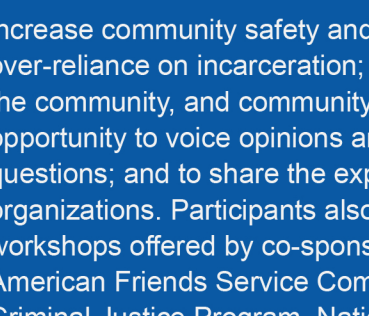
# Safe & Just Michigan

## Not Taking a Break This Summer

Political action at the state Capitol may quiet down during the summer, but that doesn't mean Safe & Just Michigan is taking the summer off. Fresh off of [changing our name](#) from CAPPS to **Safe & Just Michigan** in June to better reflect our expanded mission, we're hard at work making your priorities a reality in our state. Read on to learn more about what Safe & Just Michigan is doing to advance community health, well-being and justice in Michigan.

## Detroit Meeting Spurs Future Plans

Approximately 40 people attended Safe & Just Michigan's Detroit Community Meeting at the Nazarene Baptist Church on Saturday, July 14.

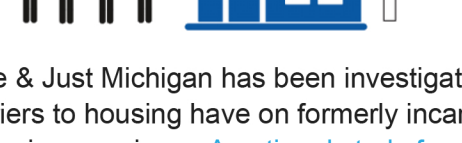


It was the first in a series of community outreach meetings Safe & Just Michigan will host to provide updates on legislation

to increase community safety and reduce Michigan's over-reliance on incarceration; to give our members, the community, and community leaders an opportunity to voice opinions and find answers to questions; and to share the expertise of our partner organizations. Participants also participated in workshops offered by co-sponsors, including the American Friends Service Committee Michigan Criminal Justice Program, Nation Outside and the State Appellate Defenders Office. Other co-sponsors include Luck Inc. Solutions, Michigan Faith in Action, RecoveryPark and Still Standing Against Domestic Violence. We are grateful for the expertise and partnership of our event co-sponsors, and especially Pastor Kevin Harris, the statewide coordinator for Nation Outside, who allowed us to use the Nazarene Baptist Church for our meeting.

Safe & Just Michigan and our co-hosts will be planning follow-up meetings and advocacy trainings in Detroit.

## HOUSING & CRIMINAL JUSTICE



Safe & Just Michigan has been investigating the impact barriers to housing have on formerly incarcerated people and crime survivors. [A national study found](#) that 9 percent of adult state and federal inmates reported an episode of homelessness in the year prior to arrest, 4 to 6 times the estimated rate in the general U.S. adult population. And upon re-entry, people who receive supportive housing were found to be 61 percent less likely to be re-incarcerated within one year.

Safe & Just Michigan is working with organizations such as Michigan Coalition Against Homeless to create greater access to safe and affordable housing opportunities. Housing agency staff and housing advocates are encouraged to join these conversations to learn more about our collective next steps to break down the barriers to housing for the crime survivors and formerly incarcerated people you serve. Upcoming events will take place in Grand Rapids on Aug. 11 and in Flint on Sept. 7.

RSVP at: <http://bit.ly/HousingCriminalJusticeRSVP>

## State Budget Impacts Prisoners

The Michigan legislature passed the state budget for fiscal year 2018-19 in June and Gov. Rick Snyder has signed it into law. It contains a few items that are significant to people interested in criminal justice reform:

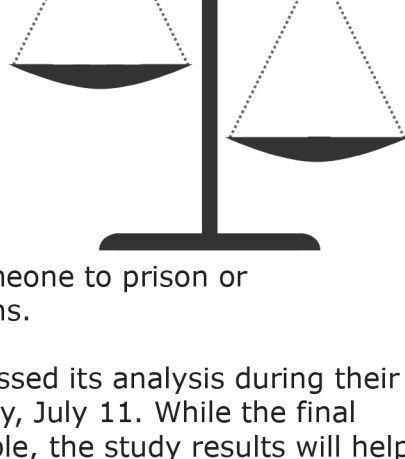
- The state will close a still-to-be named prison, saving \$19.2 million. A timeline for the closing has yet to be announced.
- The budget sets aside \$13.2 million to hire state employees to provide prison food services. They'll replace Trinity Service workers when their contract expires in July. Trinity's relationship with the state had been strained due to inadequate staffing levels and other problems.
- The budget allocates \$9.2 million to train more than 350 new corrections officers, \$2.4 million to expand education and skills training with tablet computers for higher-security inmates, \$2 million to recruit and train prison health care workers and \$2 million to improve on-the-job training for incarcerated people working in prison kitchens.
- The budget also stipulates that the Michigan Department of Corrections will work with the Michigan Restaurant Association on job placement for people on parole and probation.

## Ending Sentence Disparities in Michigan

We all believe everyone should have a fair outcome in the courts, no matter who we are, where we live, or how much money we have in the bank.

That isn't necessarily the way it works. Research shows that two people convicted of similar crimes can receive very different sentences depending on several variables.

That's one reason the [Criminal Justice Policy Commission](#) is completing a study that looks at sentencing discrepancies in Michigan in a certain set of cases known as "straddle cells," where judges have the discretion to send someone to prison or impose lesser sanctions.



The commission discussed its analysis during their meeting on Wednesday, July 11. While the final report isn't yet available, the study results will help us understand whether there are unwarranted sentencing disparities and, if so, how those disparities may be addressed.

For more information about the study, [read more here](#).

## Communications Specialist Joins Our Team

Barbara Wieland joined our team earlier this month. She is responsible for the organization's daily communication activities and developing strategies to effectively communicate with stakeholders, partner groups and the wider community.



You can learn more about her [here](#).

She can be reached at [barbara@safeandjustmi.org](mailto:barbara@safeandjustmi.org) or by phone at (517) 258-4288.

## Safe & Just Michigan In the News

Safe & Just Michigan's work to break down barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated people is catching the attention of newsmakers.

- [Michigan Capitol Confidential](#) listed Safe & Just Michigan as one member in a broad coalition working to break down barriers to post-incarceration employment by working to pass House Bills 6110-6113. The bills would not allow licensing boards or agencies to arbitrarily declare that a past criminal conviction excludes a candidate from certain licenses under a "good moral character" requirement.

- [The Mackinaw Center](#) published an opinion piece against a proposed Michigan Department of Health and Human Services policy that would severely limit people with a history with the criminal justice system from working as Medicaid providers. The editorial quotes our policy director, John Cooper, who said:

**"This policy would not only cut off access to potentially life-changing jobs in health care for people with criminal histories, it would take those jobs away from the many people that already have such jobs and who are models of successful re-entry into society — including current substance abuse counselors and peer coaches. Not only is this a needless change to Medicaid policy, it is likely to negatively impact public safety by taking away the livelihoods of numerous current providers."**

## Get Involved!

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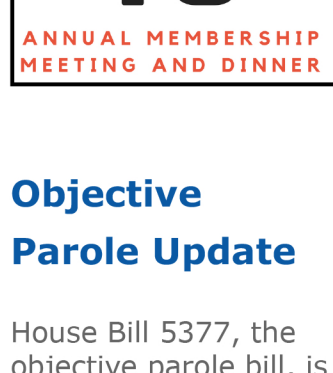
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[Join Safe & Just Michigan](#)



## Save the Date

Safe & Just Michigan's Annual Membership Meeting and dinner is scheduled for the weekend of Thursday, Oct. 18. The event will be held at the Radisson Hotel in downtown Lansing. The event will include speakers, Board elections, entertainment, and a buffet dinner. We are planning an exciting event with more details to come via our electronic newsletter.



## Objective Parole Update

House Bill 5377, the objective parole bill, is awaiting action in the Michigan Senate.

No activity on the bill is planned over the summer, as legislators are on summer break. Session will resume for a month in September, pause for a while before the November election, and resume again for a "lame duck" session in November. When the time comes, we may be calling on you to engage with your Senator to ask them to support this important legislation. Please stay tuned!

## Ready to Retire

After six years of exceptional leadership, SJM Executive Director Laura Sager is retiring this year. We are grateful for her years of service and unfaltering commitment to the mission and vision of Safe & Just Michigan.

We are seeking a highly skilled leader to fulfill the role of executive director at Safe & Just Michigan. Learn more about this opportunity [here](#).

## Plan to Vote

The primary election being held Aug. 7 will determine which names are placed on the November ballot in many races, including the governor's race and many other state-level and congressional races. If you're not sure if you're registered, or if you don't know where your polling location is, check online [here](#).

Remember, if you were formerly incarcerated, you **ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE**, even if you are still on parole or probation. However, you may have to re-register to vote. Check your registration [here](#).

Additional information about voting in this year's primary election, including how to vote by absentee ballot and how primaries are different from general elections, is available [here](#).



## Clock Ticking on 'Raise the Age'

Time is running out on the opportunity to pass "Raise the Age" legislation that would end Michigan's practice of sentencing 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system. If the bills that have been introduced aren't passed and signed into law by the time the current legislative session ends in December, they will have to be re-introduced in the next legislative session that begins in 2019.

Alicia Guevara-Warren of the Michigan League for Public Policy [wrote recently](#) that the 'Raise the Age' legislation faces significant headwinds if it is to pass this year, and urged people who wanted to see it pass to speak up on its behalf.

## Upon Further Research

You may be interested in these recent papers, surveys and research:

- **Michigan is on track to become more diverse.** That makes embracing diversity not only the *right thing to do* ethically, but a [smart business move](#), too. (From the W.K. Kellogg Foundation)

- **Michigan crime survivors** would overwhelmingly prefer forms of *restorative justice* over long prison sentences for their perpetrators, according to a recent study from the Alliance for Safety and Justice entitled "[Crime Survivors Speak](#)."

- Formerly incarcerated people are **unemployed at a rate higher than the jobless rate during the Great Depression**, and black women suffer the most from the "*prison penalty*" — the unemployment gap between the general public and formerly incarcerated people. The results are outlined in "[Out of Prison and Out of Work](#)," from the Prison Policy Initiative.

## Do You Know?

Among working-age individuals ages 25-44, the unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated people is 27.3 percent, compared with just 5.2 percent for their general public peers. Safe & Just Michigan is working to bring down the employment that stop formerly incarcerated people from rebuilding their lives.

(Source: Prison Policy Initiative)