Safe & Just Michigan

August 30, 2018

Update from Safe & Just Michigan

View email in your browser

SAVE THE DATE

Ellen Buchman
The Opportunity Agenda - New York, NY
Vice President

Leon El-Alamin
MADE Institute - Flint, Mich.
Founder & Executive Director

Safe & Just Michigan Annual Membership Meeting and dinner
Thursday, October 18 - 5:30-8:30 p.m.
Radisson Hotel in Lansing

"Moving hearts and minds toward reform" keynote, legislative updates, a buffet dinner, a brief election for members of the board of directors and a vote on bylaws updates. Tickets - $25. A limited number of complimentary tickets available, and a bus from Detroit may be available. Contact Safe & Just Michigan for more information.

Keep your eye out for further communications with registration and ticket details.

You’re invited!

Action Alert

We hope to see you Oct. 18 at the Safe & Just Michigan Annual Membership Meeting and dinner. The event will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing and will feature speakers Ellen Buchman, vice president of The Opportunity Agenda in New York, and Leon El-Alamin, founder and executive director of the MADE Institute in Flint. They will be speaking on this year's theme, "Moving hearts and minds toward reform." Other activities will include a legislative updates, a buffet dinner and a brief election for members of the board of directors and a vote on bylaws updates.

Tickets are $25. A limited number of complimentary tickets are available. For more information, please contact Safe & Just Michigan at 517.482.7753 or write to us at info@safeandjustmi.org.

If you're unable to attend but would like to support our work, or if you'd like to contribute toward the complimentary tickets, your charitable donations are gratefully appreciated. To contribute, please visit us here.

Objective parole moves to Senate

The objective parole bill, House Bill 5377, is anticipated to receive a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee headed by Sen. **Rick Jones** (R-Grand Ledge) sometime this fall. If the bill is approved by the committee, it would make its way to the Senate floor, where it could be taken up for a vote. The bill already passed by the House by a vote of 97-10 in May.

We are racing against the clock to get this bill passed by the Senate and signed into law. Lawmakers are currently on summer break, and most of them are currently focused on the ongoing election season. A limited number of session days are scheduled for September and October before the Legislature returns after the election for a lame duck session.

If the objective parole bill isn't enacted before the end of the year, it would have to be re-introduced next year.

Detroit Community Meeting Scheduled

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is still considering rules that would exclude thousands of people from working as or for a provider of Medicaid services — an issue we informed you about in April and May.

This policy would cost hundreds of people with criminal histories their jobs and bar thousands more from employment in health care — one of Michigan's largest industries, and a job sector that already struggles to find enough skilled workers.

However, following widespread concern and after hearing YOUR objections, MDHHS is still deliberating and has delayed implementation of the proposed policy.

SJM has been meeting with state officials to explain that qualified individuals shouldn't be kept from holding good jobs simply because of the stigma of a criminal record. However, the Medicaid division of MDHHS continues to support a version of this policy and may decide on further revisions to it within the next month.

We are continuing to advocate against this policy with MDHHS and other policymakers in Lansing. If you agree with us that this is bad public policy, please join us in letting MDHHS know.

A suggested letter to the MDHHS policy office can be found on our website.

Please consider contacting MDHHS and letting them know why it's important for formerly incarcerated people to be able to find and keep good jobs.

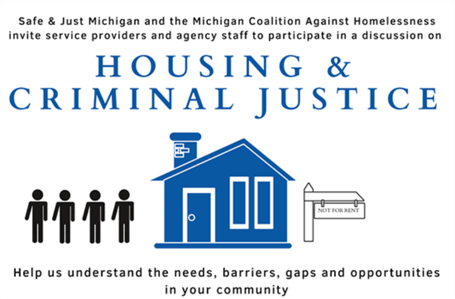
The next Safe & Just Michigan Detroit Community Meeting will be held on Saturday, Sept. 22, at the Nazarene Baptist Church in Detroit, located at 901 Melbourne St., from 3-5 p.m.

These meetings will give give community members — especially those who have been affected by the criminal justice system — a chance to talk about their concerns, a legislative update and information about they can support reforms.

All are welcome to attend these free sessions. Pre-registration is helpful for planning purposes, as light refreshments will be provided. To pre-register, please visit our events page.

Presentations at the Sept. 22 meeting will include:

- Supporting your loved ones pre- and post-release — with Nation Outside Michigan Co-ordinator Kevin Harris.
- Healing harm that has been done — with Still Standing Founder and Executive Director Shari Ware.

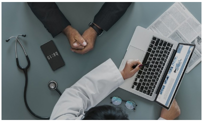


Safe & Just Michigan and the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness invite service providers and agency staff to participate in a discussion on

HOUSING & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Help us understand the needs, barriers, gaps and opportunities in your community

Housing service providers, advocates and others interested in the issue are invited to join us for an opportunity 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. The next meeting will take place in Flint on Sept. 7 from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the Genesee County Community Action Resource Department, 601 N. Saginaw St. - Suite 1B in Flint. You may RSVP here or call us at 517.482.7753 to RSVP.



Prison to close

The Ojibway Correctional Facility, located in Gogebic County in the extreme western part of the Upper Peninsula, will close in December. It is the second prison closing the Michigan Department of Corrections has announced in 2018.

SJM is pleased to see the state's prison population decline, though we understand the uncertainty job losses can bring a community. We are hopeful that this transition will be made with community health and safety at its center.

Check it out

Did you know that Safe & Just Michigan has a blog that posts regularly on criminal justice reform topics such as pending legislation, upcoming events and breaking news?

Visit our blog, where you can read about:

- Efforts to expand Michigan's expungement laws.
- A series on Michigan's felony firearm law.
- Wrap-ups of recent events and meetings.
- Voting information for people who were formerly incarcerated.

Stigma creates hurdles to housing

The stigma of a criminal record creates a hurdle to housing that is difficult for many formerly incarcerated people to overcome, several participants at a Housing & Criminal Justice meeting in Grand Rapids said on Aug. 10. The meeting was the second in a series hosted by Safe & Just Michigan and the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness.

Approximately 30 people from partnering agencies came together to talk about the challenges the formerly incarcerated and crime survivors face in finding affordable and safe housing. The meetings are part of an effort to learn about the experiences of different organizations throughout the state and to discuss possible next steps to improve the problem.

Officer Ruth Walters

"If I could change any one thing, it would be to educate the general public and landlords to get rid of the stigmas that surround formerly incarcerated people," said Grand Rapids Police Department Officer Ruth Walters, who runs CLEAR — the Coalition, Leadership, Education, Advice, Rehabilitation Program for formerly incarcerated women. "No one ever hears the success stories that come out of prison, and there are so many of them."

Housing & Criminal Justice

By the Numbers

- Profiles of formerly incarcerated people.
- Breaking news.

On Further Research

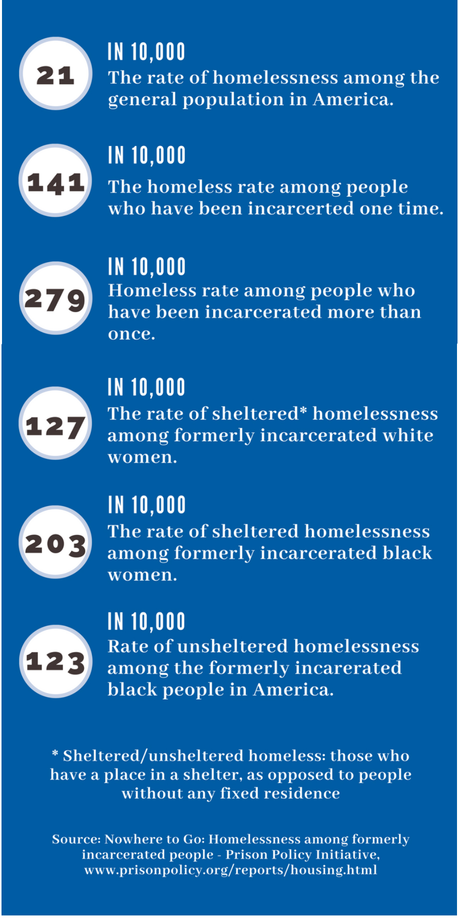
You may be interested in these recent reports and research:

- **The state of Michigan has been rebuked by a federal judge.** The 6th US Court of Appeals sharply rebuked the state of Michigan for denying earned "Good Time" credits to prisoners who were sentenced to life without parole as minors. Good Time was ended by a voter referendum in 1978, but many juvenile lifers had accrued credits before then.

Judge Jane Branstetter wrote in the decision that she hopes this is the last in a long line of legal disputes on the subject and that "it is now time to devote the energies of the parties to rectifying the constitutional harm suffered by plaintiffs." (From Michigan Radio)

- **Recidivism nosedives.** Recidivism — as defined by the share of people who return to state prison three years after being released — has sharply declined over the past seven years across 23 states, according to an analysis of Federal Bureau of Justice statistics done by The Pew Charitable Trusts. According to their report, three-year recidivism rates have fallen 26 percent between 2005 and 2015.

Michigan wasn't included in this report, but recidivism has sharply declined here as well. In



IN 10,000

21 The rate of homelessness among the general population in America.

IN 10,000

141 The homeless rate among people who have been incarcerted one time.

IN 10,000

279 Homeless rate among people who have been incarcerated more than once.

IN 10,000

127 The rate of sheltered* homelessness among formerly incarcerated white women.

IN 10,000

203 The rate of sheltered homelessness among formerly incarcerated black women.

IN 10,000

123 Rate of unsheltered homelessness among the formerly incarerated black people in America.

* Sheltered/unsheltered homeless: those who have a place in a shelter, as opposed to people without any fixed residence

Source: Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among formerly incarcerated people - Prison Policy Initiative, www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html

2006, the three-year recidivism rate in Michigan was 49.4 percent, but it had fallen to 29.8 percent as of 2016.

- **The risk of trial.** More than 97 percent of federal criminal cases are resolved with plea deals instead of a trial, according to "The Trial Penalty," a report from the National Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys. Those who opt to go to trial are often sentenced to longer prison stays than those who take a plea deal. The study also found that the prospect of harsh sentences may drive innocent people to accept plea deals rather than risk going to trial. A review of 354 federal cases where people were exonerated by DNA revealed that 11 percent of them had accepted plea deals despite being innocent.

Get Involved!

- Subscribe to this e-newsletter.
- Donate now to help us advance our work.
- Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.
- Visit our website.

Safe & Just Michigan (SJM)
www.safeandjustmi.org | **517.482.7753 info@safeandjustmi.org**
222 West Genesee Street, Lansing, Michigan 48933

Join Safe & Just Michigan

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list