

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, Dec. 10, 2018

Contact: Kate McCracken
Phone: 517.225.3186
Email: kate@safeandjustmi.org

Safe & Just
Michigan

Safe & Just Michigan Looks to Future with New Executive Director

Associate Director named successor to retiring executive director

LANSING — Safe & Just Michigan Executive Director **Laura Sager** is retiring from her position effective Dec. 31 after serving the organization since 2012 and being the executive since 2013. She will be succeeded by Safe & Just Michigan's current Associate Director of Policy & Research **John Cooper**, who joined the organization in 2017. Safe & Just Michigan works to advance policies that end Michigan's overuse of incarceration and promote community safety and healing.

"Leading this organization has been the capstone to my career in the criminal justice movement. I'm proud of Safe & Just Michigan's vision of a safer, more just Michigan and our outstanding leadership team, which will continue to press for long-overdue reforms on behalf of all Michigan residents," Sager said. "Safe & Just Michigan has been instrumental in pursuing safe, sensible parole reforms that will further reduce Michigan's prison population and the state's corrections budget. In addition, we have spearheaded reforms to increase investment in safer communities."

Prior to joining the SJM team, Sager was executive director of the Campaign for Justice, from 2007-2011, which worked to reform Michigan's public defense delivery system. She also served as national executive director, national campaign director, and Michigan director for Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM), a national nonprofit sentencing reform organization. She led a bipartisan campaign that won sweeping reforms of Michigan's then harshest-in-the-nation mandatory minimum drug laws. She also is a founder and Board member of the National Network for Justice.

Safe & Just Michigan's board of directors chose Safe & Just Michigan's Associate Director of Policy & Research John Cooper to succeed Sager, who has been with the organization since April 2017. Before joining Safe & Just Michigan, Cooper served as special counsel for criminal justice policy in the office of state Rep. **David LaGrand** (D-Grand Rapids). He also spent seven years as the litigator in the Washington, D.C., office of Latham & Watkins LLP, and as law clerk to the Hon. Boyce F. Martin Jr. of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit. Cooper grew up in Grand Rapids and has a bachelor's degree with honors from Calvin College and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Virginia School of Law.

"The board determined that John Cooper has the right combination of experience, knowledge, skill and expertise about Michigan to take Safe & Just Michigan to the next level," said Safe & Just Michigan Board President **Michael Vizena**. "John's leadership was instrumental to Safe & Just Michigan's ability to shepherd the objective parole bill through the legislative process and seeing it signed into law. We are confident that under his leadership, the staff of Safe & Just Michigan will work together to realize the ambitious goals outlined in our strategic plan."

Cooper said that he expects to continue many of his current duties as policy director in his new job, and that he sees the executive director role as an opportunity to make an even bigger impact on the well-being of his home state.

"As someone who was born and raised in Michigan, I am deeply committed to helping make our state safer, more prosperous, and more just. I'm grateful for the board's confidence in me, and I am excited about the opportunity to lead our organization forward toward these goals alongside my colleagues and partner organizations."

Cooper will become executive director effective Jan. 1, 2019.

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Safe & Just Michigan (www.safeandjustmi.org) works to advance policies that end Michigan's over-use of incarceration and promote community safety and healing. We partner with Michigan organizations and leaders from across the political spectrum, including business and community leaders, faith communities, crime survivor organizations, formerly incarcerated individuals, prisoners and their families, as well as Michigan taxpayers statewide.