Safe & Just
Michigan

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Update from Safe & Just Michigan

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Thanks to your generosity, Safe & Just Michigan raised $3,350 on #GivingTuesday, which means that on one day, we met the entire cost of printing and mailing our newsletters to people who are incarcerated for all of 2019. You have provided a year's worth of legislative updates, criminal justice research, outreach information and more to our readers. In the pages of our newsletters, our readers will find hope and knowledge, and encouragement to engage with us as partners in the fight for real criminal justice reform. Thank you so much for your kindness.

'Raise the Age' takes step forward

The "lame duck" session of Michigan's Legislature began when lawmakers returned from the Thanksgiving break on Tuesday, Nov. 27. At a meeting of the House Law and Justice Committee that day, legislation that would end Michigan's status as one of just four states that treats 17-

WE ARE HIRING

year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system advanced to the House floor.

"These individuals in whatever stage of life they are, whether they're still in high school or just finished high school, certainly have an opportunity to be rehabilitated as the mind is still forming," committee Chairman Rep. **Klint Kesto** (R-Commerce Township), pictured right, said in a story in the Detroit News. "This is a great opportunity for us as a state and society to make that a focus."

The legislation had stalled for months as legislators failed to come to an agreement over how to cover the costs associated with removing 17-year-olds from the adult justice system, which is funded through the state government, and placing them in the juvenile system, which is funded at the county level. With a compromise reached, the package of legislation moved out of the committee on a vote of 9-2, with Reps. **Joseph Graves** (R-Argentine Township)and **Lana Theis** (R-Brighton) opposing.

Safe & Just Michigan Associate Director of Policy & Research **John Cooper** said it isn't clear if the legislation will be able to clear the Senate before the end of the year, when the legislative session ends. If it doesn't, it will have to be reintroduced next year.

(To see outline of bills and bill numbers included in the Raise the Age legislative package, click here.)

We are seeking a qualified candidate for our Community Engagement Specialist position. This full-time position requires a concentration of outreach activities in the Detroit area. The candidate is expected to have a presence at the Safe & Just Michigan headquarters in Lansing on a weekly basis. The position requires in-state travel.

The community engagement specialist is responsible for cultivating strategic partnerships through community outreach activities. The core activities of this position include relationship building, partnership development and maintenance and coalition building. The position reports to the associate director of communications & community engagement and works in partnership with the outreach director.

To Apply

To apply, email your cover letter outlining your interest in this position, resume and two professional references to

Lame duck legislative update

A number of criminal justice-related bills have been worked on this legislative session without successfully making their way entirely through the process and being signed into law. They include bills that would establish a compassionate parole for incarcerated people who are medically frail, occupational licensing reforms that would make it easier for formerly incarcerated people to obtain professional licenses and a package of legisltion that would fundamentally overhaul the state's cash bail system.

Unless these bills complete the legislative process and become law by the end of the year, they will have to be reintroduced in the next legislative session, which begins on Jan. 1, 2019. The period of time between now and that deadline is known as "lame duck," and it is a time of tremendous activity in the Michgian legislature, as lawmakers hurry to meet that deadline.

With just one week of the lame duck session completed, it's difficult to determine how many of these bills and legislative packages might be signed into law when the curtain closes on the 2018 lame duck session.

However, of all these pieces of legislation, the occupational licensing bills are closest to the finish line. House Bills 6110-13 and HB 6381 breezed through the House earlier this fall, and are expected to have an easy time making it throuogh the Senate — if they are taken up by the Senate Regulatory Reform Committee and then sent to the Senate Floor for a vote. Earlier this week, SJM Associate Director of Policy & Research John Cooper said he remains hopeful this will happen.

The medical parole legislation is more complicated. While the plan passed through the House in May, it was significantly weakened by the Senate committee. If the Senate does pass it, it will have to return to the House, which will then have to agree to the changes made by the Senate. But many people who once supported the plan are now divided on whether it is better to pass the legislation in its current state,

kate@safeandjustmi.org with "Community Engagement Specialist" in the subject line. Only applicants with a complete submission of the requested information will be considered.

This position will remain open until filled – looking to fill the position immediately.

Detroit Potluck

Safe & Just Michigan will host a community potluck in Detroit on Saturday, Dec. 15, from 3-5 p.m. at the Nazarene Baptist Church, 901 Melbourne St. in Detroit. This event is free, but we request that you pre-register so we can better prepare for the number of people who are planning to attend. To register, please click on this link. If you plan to attend, please RSVP by contacting SJM Outreach Director Troy Rienstra at troy@safeandjustmi.org or 586.925.6286 and let him know if you will bring a dish to pass. All are welcome for an afternoon of information sharing, discussion, fellowship and holiday spirit. We hope to see you there!

SJM in the news

or to introduce new, stronger legislation in the next legislative session.

The bail reform package has the longest way to go to be signed into law. While it has bipartisan support, it was just introduced in the House in October, and has yet to receive its first committee hearing. It would have to clear the entire legislative process during lame duck.

Stay tuned for updates on these and other legislative efforts.

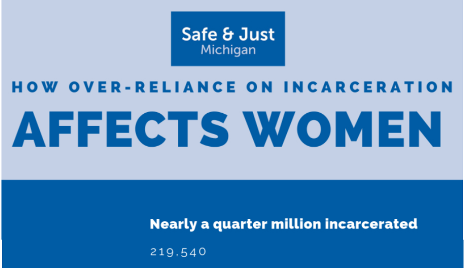
Have you taken a look at our blog?

We invite you to take a look at our blog. We regularly post articles about criminal justice reform efforts taking place here in Michigan and nationwide, as well as current research, information about upcoming community events and more. If you haven't been reading lately, here's what you've been missing:

- SJM Associate Director of Policy & Research John Cooper wrote about his visit to the Lakeland Correctional Facility, where he fielded questions from members of Chapter #1013 of the National Lifers of America organization.

- We observed Veteran's Day by sharing information about Michigan's veterans treatment courts.

- We talked about proposals to improve Michigan's expungement process, including Clean Slate legislation.

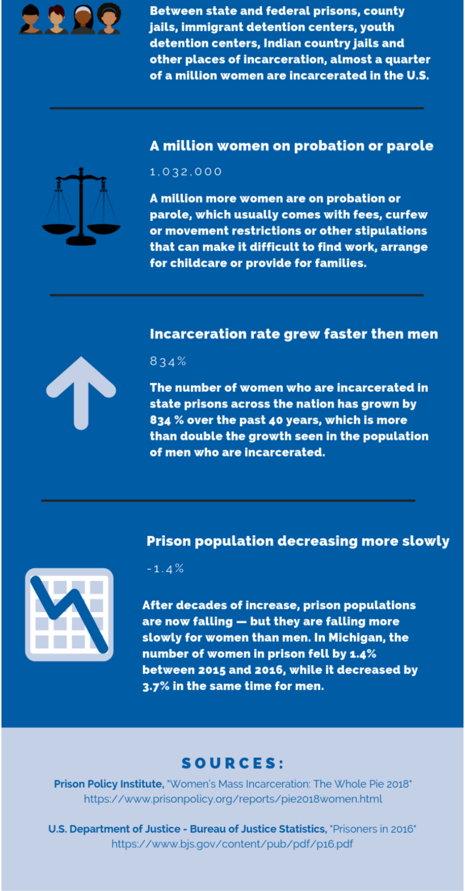

Safe & Just
Michigan
HOW OVER-RELIANCE ON INCARCERATION
AFFECTS WOMEN
Nearly a quarter million incarcerated
219,540

Safe & Just Michigan continues to build its reputation among reporters as the leading reliable source for information on criminal justice reform in Michigan. Here are some of our latest media mentions:

- "Bills seek to make bail system more fair for low-income defendants," *Capital News Service, Nov. 2, 2018:* People charged with crimes must pay their bail directly to the court. If they are unable to afford the bail set, they are detained in county jail, possibly until trial. The bail system has been used historically to ensure defendants show up for their court date.

"That's a period of time where you're not going to your job, not earning money, not able to care for your kids," said John Cooper of SJM. "There needs to be an individualized look at someone's case before taking away their liberty."

- "Forgive pot offenders, but don't stop there," *Detroit Free Press editorial board, Nov. 18, 2018:* Gov.-elect Gretchen Whitmer has said she will use the governor's power of clemency to free currently incarcerated marijuana offenders.
... But it's just the first



Between state and federal prisons, county jails, immigrant detention centers, youth detention centers, Indian country jails and other places of incarceration, almost a quarter of a million women are incarcerated in the U.S.

A million women on probation or parole

1,032,000

A million more women are on probation or parole, which usually comes with fees, curfew or movement restrictions or other stipulations that can make it difficult to find work, arrange for childcare or provide for families.

Incarceration rate grew faster then men

834%

The number of women who are incarcerated in state prisons across the nation has grown by 834 % over the past 40 years, which is more than double the growth seen in the population of men who are incarcerated.

Prison population decreasing more slowly

-1.4%

After decades of increase, prison populations are now falling — but they are falling more slowly for women than men. In Michigan, the number of women in prison fell by 1.4% between 2015 and 2016, while it decreased by 3.7% in the same time for men.

SOURCES:

Prison Policy Institute, "Women's Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2018"
https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2018women.html

U.S. Department of Justice - Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2016"
https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p16.pdf

step. Michigan's Legislature must also smooth the path for past marijuana offenders to clear their records. ...

Expungement is currently limited to offenders whose transgressions fit specific circumstances, said John Cooper, associate director of policy and research at Safe & Just Michigan, and can be a burdensome process. But he added that automatic expungement for previously convicted offenders is logistically complicated and would involve coordination of potentially hundreds of thousands of records between state agencies and local court systems.

But these are logistical obstacles, not philosophical or moral arguments, and a Legislature that understands the inherent unfairness of incarcerating or penalizing offenders for actions that are no longer illegal must act.

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