



---

## **On Day of Empathy, Lawmakers and Advocates Say Michigan Needs More Criminal Justice Reform**

*Talks on voter rights, bail, juvenile life, incarcerated women highlight day*

LANSING — State legislators, formerly incarcerated people and advocates came together Tuesday for the 2022 Day of Empathy at the Michigan State Capitol to talk about some of the most pressing criminal justice reform issues facing the state, including the need for bail reform, a proposal to end juvenile life without parole sentencing, voting rights for formerly incarcerated people and specific concerns facing women at the Huron Valley Women’s Correctional Facility. The Day of Empathy, sponsored nationally by Dream Corps Justice and hosted at the state-level by Safe & Just Michigan, is a day to inform people about the need for criminal justice reform while highlighting the humanity of people who have been involved with the criminal justice system.

“The last few years have brought changes that opened up opportunities to people with old criminal records, giving them chances at good jobs and safe housing that they had been shut out of for decades,” said Safe & Just Michigan Executive Director **John S. Cooper**. “But there is still a lot of work to be done. We are still sending juveniles to prison for life and telling them there’s no way they will ever come home, and legally innocent people are losing their liberty and livelihoods because they can’t afford to pay bail. We need to do more work to make our justice system fair to all and our communities safe for everyone.”

Legislation is currently pending for several of these issues, including laws to ban the practice of sentencing juveniles to life without sentencing (Senate Bills 848-851) and a proposal to significantly reform cash bail (House Bills 5436-5443). Both sets of bills are awaiting their first hearings in the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety and the House Judiciary Committee, respectively.

“Michigan has come a long way from the days when residents and lawmakers believed that tough-on-crime laws led to safer communities,” said Safe & Just Michigan Senior Policy Analyst **Josh Hoe**. “Thankfully, after decades of tough-on-crime laws, a bipartisan majority of legislators in Michigan started to work together to pass legislation that was smart on crime — not just ‘tough.’ Our state is strongest when as many people as possible are able to work, raise families and invest in making their communities safe and strong. But there is still work to do, and the Day of Empathy is about bringing justice-impacted communities together with legislators to continue Michigan’s national leadership in the area of criminal justice.”

”

This year's Day of Empathy offered four discussion panels to focus on current issues before the state. The panels and participants were:

**Your Voice, Your Vote** – Presented by [Nation Outside](#) with moderator **Ashley Goldon**, Statewide Program Director of Nation Outside

- **Amani Sawari**, Campaign Coordinator of [Restore Right2Vote](#)
- State Rep. **Sarah Anthony** (D-Lansing)
- **Darryl Woods Sr.**, Detroit Regional Coordinator of Nation Outside

**Bailing on Bail: Why Cash Bail is the Opposite of Justice** with moderator **Aiden Cotter**, Senior Program Associate at the [Vera Institute of Justice](#)

- State Rep. **Steve Johnson**, (R-Wayland)
- **Jon Meyer**, Operations Manager at Abcor Industries
- **Alyshia Dyer**, former Washtenaw County road patrol deputy and speaker for the [Law Enforcement Action Partnership](#)

**An End to Juvenile Life Without Parole** with moderator **Eric Alexander**, Senior Advocate at the [Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth](#)

- Sen. **Jeff Irwin** (D-Ann Arbor)
- **Jose Burgos**, Re-Entry Specialist for the State Appellate Defender's Office
- **Felecia Tyson-Waters**, Community Organizer

**Building power with incarcerated women: Standing in solidarity with people at Women's Huron Valley** – presented by the [American Friends Service Committee-Michigan Criminal Justice Program](#), with moderator: **Natalie Holbrook**, Program Director of the AFSC-MCJP

- **Lawanda Hollister**, Owner of [The Chow Hall](#)
- **Monica Jahner**, Program Director of [A.R.R.O.](#)
- **Annie Somerville**, Ypsilanti City Council Member

Safe & Just Michigan thanks our co-sponsors for the 2022 Day of Empathy: [AFSC - Michigan Criminal Justice Program](#), [A.R.R.O.](#), [Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth](#), the [Carceral State Project](#), [Citizens for Prison Reform](#), [Friends of Restorative Justice](#), [Michigan Center for Youth Justice](#), [Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration](#), [Michigan Faith in Action](#), [Nation Outside](#) and [Prison Creative Arts Project](#).

###

Safe & Just Michigan ([www.safeandjustmi.org](http://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.