

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 18, 2024

Contact: Kate McCracken

Phone: 517.225.3186

Email: kate@safeandjustmi.org

Safe & Just
Michigan

Statement from Safe & Just Michigan Policy Advocacy Manager Jazmine Wells on the Senate Civil Rights, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee voting Senate Bill 599 (improving medically frail parole) to the Senate floor on April 11, 2024:

“Safe & Just Michigan thanks the committee for moving Senate Bill 599 forward to the Senate Floor. SB 599 is a technical fix to the 2019 Medically Frail Parole statute that will enable the law — which has only resulted in one parole in five years since it passed — to function as intended. Safe & Just Michigan supports SB 599 because it will enable the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) to parole medically frail people to facilities better suited to their needs, allowing the MDOC to focus on its core functions and save millions by shifting the costs of care to Medicaid from Michigan’s General Fund.

“Medically frail people are, by definition, terminally ill or mentally or physically incapacitated. Based on their medical condition alone, they do not pose a threat to the public. Further, medically frail parole is a discretionary process, and the parole board can be trusted to make informed choices about who to select for release and can mitigate any concerns about a person’s mobility by authorizing the use of a tether or other conditions of release if deemed necessary.

“If unaddressed, the medically frail population and challenges related to it will continue to grow: by 2026, 1 in 5 people in MDOC custody will be aged 55 or older. The overall costs for older incarcerated people are approximately 3 times higher than the costs for younger incarcerated people. These resources are better invested in areas such as in-prison programming, vocational training, and re-entry support services.

“We urge the Senate to pass SB 599 promptly, as it will bring a needed avenue for medically frail people in MDOC. Prisons are not designed to house or provide medical care for medically vulnerable people, and placing medically frail people into more appropriate care settings will help alleviate current staffing concerns for health care staff and correctional officers within MDOC, and free up resources to invest in better outcomes for the rest of the prison population.”

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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.