



PLATFORM **Decarcerate PA**

No More Prisons: A Call to Conscience

Decarcerate PA is a grassroots campaign made up of organizations and individuals throughout Pennsylvania working to maximize public health and safety by putting a halt to the state's broken and bloated prison system. As many other states across the country are exploring ways to shrink their prison population and close unnecessary facilities, Pennsylvania is moving in the opposite direction. Governor Corbett is seeking to expand nine existing prisons and build three brand new ones. This plan will add 8,000 new beds to our state's already massive prison system. Yet in 2011 the governor cut nearly \$1 billion from education and made massive cuts to a host of other essential programs and services. And so we ask: during this moment of fiscal austerity, can Pennsylvania really afford to spend \$685 million to put even more people behind bars?

The governor can continue the failed policies of the past, policies that have made our state a national leader in incarceration even as we have fallen behind in education, employment, and environmental protection. Alternatively, he can help make Pennsylvania a state that gives all its residents a safe environment in which to learn, live, and grow. Thirty years of limitless spending on prisons has been more than enough. This massive social experiment is over, and the conclusion is clear. Mass incarceration destroys families and communities. It disproportionately targets poor people and people of color. It means fewer jobs and more environmental devastation. It makes us less safe and more afraid.

Decarcerate PA has come together around three core initiatives to boost Pennsylvania's economic, environmental, and ethical health. This platform advocates a sensible policy agenda that we hope will provide a road map for our state legislators, district attorneys, Department of Corrections administrators, and the Governor to follow. This platform reflects the desires of communities across our state. Decarcerate PA is committed to working closely with individuals and organizations throughout Pennsylvania to bring about these changes. We invite all individuals, community groups, and social movements working for a just Pennsylvania to join us in these efforts.

DECARCERATE PA PLATFORM

No new prisons

Enough is enough! More prisons mean more problems.

We advocate that Pennsylvania enact an immediate and lasting moratorium on all new prisons, county or city jails, prison expansions, new beds in county jails, immigrant detention facilities, and private prisons.

New prisons become full prisons. Pennsylvania has filled every prison it has built; new facilities only exacerbate the problem of overcrowding. Like new highways that create even more traffic, building new prisons means putting more people in prison. What new and expanded prisons do not do is make Pennsylvanians any safer. New prisons come at the expense of the very things that make us safe--jobs, housing, a clean environment, strong communities. Most prison jobs are reserved for existing state employees, making them unavailable to many people who live in the towns where prisons are constructed. The construction projects are short-term and increasingly not unionized. And locking people up removes them from

the labor force entirely. Prisons make other forms of development hard to attract, and they pollute the air, water, and land around them. In short, more prisons mean fewer jobs and more pollution. We call on the Governor to cancel immediately all plans to build any new prisons and jails, including the expansion of existing institutions.

Decarceration

Prison overcrowding can be solved one way and one way only: reduce the number of people in prison.

We advocate that Pennsylvania shrink its prison population by reforming existing arrest, sentencing, and parole practices.

Pennsylvania can and should take steps to limit its prison population. The only way to reduce the problems caused by overcrowding and an unhealthy reliance on imprisonment is to have fewer people in prison. Misguided policies caused the wasteful and brutal practices of mass incarceration; it is going to require smarter policies to end it. We support legislation that results in fewer people going to prison and fewer people being held in prison for long stretches of time without cause. We call on our representatives to pass legislation that will transform the current system at every stage--from arrest and sentencing to parole and probation--to reduce the number of Pennsylvanians in prisons, jails, and detention centers. We also call for the full restoration of civil and human rights for formerly incarcerated people.

Community Reinvestment

Imprisonment guts local resources and destroys families. We need to build communities, not prisons.

We advocate that Pennsylvania reinvest money spent on prisons into community institutions.

The money slated for prison expansion would be better invested in the well being of all Pennsylvanians, both urban and rural, east, west and central. Funds already allocated for prison expansion should be instead devoted to institutions that sustain and repair our communities. Prisons destroy our communities. Smart investment in community institutions and infrastructure makes us healthier and safer. Public money should go toward public goods: quality public schools, stable housing, jobs and job training programs, health care and food access, drug and alcohol treatment programs, community-based reentry services, and non-punitive programs that address the root causes of violence in our communities.

The task before us is as large as it is necessary. With your help, we can put an end to mass incarceration.



Decarcerate PA is a coalition of organizations and individuals seeking an immediate and lasting moratorium on all new prisons and prison expansions, county jails, and immigrant detention facilities, and also seeking positive policy changes that will reduce Pennsylvania's prison population and reinvest money into our communities.

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