



MICHIGAN JUSTICE REINVESTMENT WORKING GROUP:

Bipartisan Plan to Increase Public Safety and Reduce Spending

Michigan Justice Reinvestment Working Group

MICHIGAN STATE SENATE

Sen. Alan Cropsey (R)
Appropriations
Subcommittee on
Corrections

Sen. Wayne Kuipers (R)
Senate judiciary
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MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Summary

Representatives of the governor, speaker, and senate majority leader, who serve on the bipartisan Michigan Justice Reinvestment Working Group ("Working Group"), have agreed on a policy framework that will make residents of Michigan safer and that will reduce spending on corrections. This brief reviews the framework's elements, which include the following: deter crime; lower recidivism among high-risk probationers; and generate immediate and long term savings to state taxpayers. In developing this framework, the working group members relied heavily on data and policy options they commissioned from the Council of State Governments Justice Center. The working group has also consulted extensively with stakeholders representing law enforcement, the judiciary, counties and community-based organizations. Legislators serving on the working group anticipate advancing a legislative package that incorporates these elements in mid-May. This brief outlines these agreements, and provides a framework for further discussions among various stakeholders.

Background

Approximately a year ago, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm, Senate Majority Leader Michael D. Bishop and Speaker of the House Andy Dillon requested intensive technical assistance from the Council of State Governments Justice Center (Justice Center) to work with a bipartisan, inter-branch group of policy-makers to analyze Michigan's crime, community corrections and sentencing policies.

The Working Group reviewed analyses and policy options developed by the Justice Center, and presented these analyses and options to a cross-section of state, county and local government officials and community-based organizations at a policy forum on January 22, 2009. If these policy options are adopted, Michigan could achieve nearly \$300 million in savings over the next five years through statutory and administrative strategies to reduce spending on corrections. The Working Group also acknowledges that successful implementation of these strategies depends on upfront and sustained reinvestment of a significant portion of these savings in strategies to reduce crime and recidivism.

I. Upfront Investments to Fight Crime

Violent crime is a problem in Michigan, and local law enforcement needs resources to apprehend violent offenders and increase the state's clearance rates. A large number of unemployed, disconnected youth have a higher risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. The Working Group is focusing on three sets of resources to address these problems: state funding, federal funding, and resources from private foundations. The Working Group will also leverage resources from the federal government and private foundations to support initiatives to reduce crime in high-stakes neighborhoods.¹

The Working Group is advocating for state appropriations that reflect investments in the following strategies:

- Provide the Michigan State Police with additional resources to reduce the delays in processing evidence and speed investigations in the state's crime labs.
- Expand employment services for high-risk probationers and parolees.
- Establish pilot projects in high crime jurisdictions to reduce re-arrest rates among high-risk probationers.

The Working Group is leveraging federal funds to accomplish the following:

- Fund grant programs for local law enforcement agencies to design and deploy crime-fighting operations in partnership with local prosecutors and community and faith-based groups.
- Increase employment opportunities for at-risk young adults who are disconnected from school and employment living in high-crime neighborhoods.²

II. Recidivism Reduction Reinvestment Strategies

High-risk probationers cycle in and out of jails and prisons at a significant cost to taxpayers each year. The state should revise existing policies so that high-risk probationers receive services most likely to reduce their risk, and ensure that responses to violations of conditions of release are “swift and certain.” The Working Group agreed to reinvest savings from reduced corrections spending to establish High-Risk Probationer Pilot projects in the counties with the highest rates of violent crime in the state—Wayne and Saginaw.

The Working Group is committed to sustaining (and replicating) these strategies should they prove effective. To that end, the state will commission an evaluation of the projects to determine their impact on re-arrest rates among high-risk probationers.

The Working Group is reinvesting in a high-risk probationer pilot project with the following components:

- Set aside local jail space to allow the application of short and swift jail stays in response to violations.
- Establish a partnership between local police and probation officers to conduct weekly home visits.
- Connect probationers to behavioral health and employment services.

1. Edward Byrne Memorial JAG, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Workforce Investment Act

2. Coordination is underway among state agency officials in the Department of Labor and Economic Development, Department of

Corrections, Michigan State Housing Development Authority, and local government officials in Detroit, to develop an integrated neighborhood plan to connect at-risk youth, and probationers and parolees to employment.

III. Justice Policy Agreements

State spending on corrections consumes a significant portion of the General Fund. Funding some of the crime and recidivism reduction strategies described above is contingent on cutting spending on corrections. The Working Group agreed that there must be certainty in punishment; offenders must serve 100 percent of their court-imposed minimum sentence.

The Working Group is supporting legislation that incorporates the following elements:

- Revises the existing parole statute to ensure that people serve no more than 120 percent of their court-imposed sentence, except for offenders sentenced for offenses that carry a maximum life sentence. Permits the parole board to hold an offender beyond 120 percent of their court-imposed minimum sentence in cases where the offender poses a very high risk of re-offending as determined by a validated risk assessment.
- Revises the existing parole statute to require people revoked for the first time from parole for condition violations to serve no more than nine months in prison to ensure that the factors that led to return to prison are addressed.
- Revises the parole statute to require people to serve nine months in the community under intensive supervision prior to reaching the end of their maximum sentence.
- Revises the Community Corrections Act (CCA) to ensure that educational, employment, behavioral health treatment services, and other interventions supported through CCA resources are accessible to those probationers who pose the highest risk of reoffending.

IV. Ensuring Accountability

Michigan policymakers need timely and accurate data analyses to ensure that administrative and statutory policies are implemented and enacted appropriately. The Working Group supports the establishment of a system to monitor these activities and routinely provide state leaders with simple, concise, data-driven reports describing the extent to which goals established by the working group are being realized.

The Working Group is supporting the following actions to ensure accountability:

- Design and implement dashboard data-tracking tools that provide policymakers with real-time data on major trends in the criminal justice system, the fiscal and public safety impact of newly enacted policies, and the outcomes for people released from prison and under community supervision.
- Charge the Michigan Department of Corrections with maintaining the dashboards and working with various components of the criminal justice system to collect and analyze data, and provide periodic updates to state leaders in the legislature, the executive office, and local government stakeholders.

To learn more about the justice reinvestment strategy
in Michigan and other states, please visit:
www.justicereinvestment.org.

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