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New Report Lays Out Roadmap to Safely Reduce Michigan's Prison Population

*Thursday press conference announced new report from CAPPs: **10,000 fewer Michigan prisoners: Strategies to reach the goal***

LANSING - Today the Citizens Alliance on Prisons and Public Spending (CAPPs), a nonpartisan research and policy organization, announced the release of a new report titled: 10,000 fewer Michigan prisoners: Strategies to reach the goal. This report examines the key factors that led to a striking increase in Michigan's prison population over the last three decades, and recommends a comprehensive list of policy changes firmly grounded in data and research.

Michigan currently spends nearly \$2 billion on corrections and incarcerates nearly 44,000 people in state prisons. These recommendations could safely reduce Michigan's prison population by at least 10,000 people over the next five years, closing more than seven prisons and saving a quarter billion dollars annually.

"There is bipartisan recognition of the need to change course, both nationally and in Michigan," said **Barbara Levine, CAPPs associate director for research and policy**. "This report provides a roadmap that is consistent with the bipartisan push for smart justice through common sense reforms. It can be a useful tool for policymakers as they reconsider criminal justice policies that are both ineffective and too costly in both fiscal and human terms."

The report explains how specific practices that contributed to prison expansion can and should now be modified to reduce Michigan's prison population by 10,000, saving the state budget \$250 million annually.

The report describes two dozen strategies that would reduce admissions, shorten prison sentences, increase paroles and provide a modest amount of sentence credit for participation in prison programs. The Pew Center on the States found that Michigan's current average length of prison stay is far longer than national norms, although research has found no relationship between length of incarceration and the likelihood of reoffending. Each proposal includes estimated bedspace savings. Some are currently under consideration in the legislature.

Some of the recommendations are targeted at particular groups of prisoners who present unique issues, like the very young, the very sick and the elderly.

“We have special housing units for 15- and 16- year old children, for 70- and 80- year-olds using walkers and wheelchairs, for people who are developmentally disabled or suffering from brain damage, for people with dementia or acute psychosis, and for those being treated for terminal illnesses,” continued Levine, who authored the report. “We have to reconsider who we want to incarcerate and for how long.”

“We now have the benefit of decades of experience and a wealth of research that tells us which policies are effective and which ones are simply a burden to taxpayers,” added Levine. “Just as we adopted strategies that seemed appropriate in the 1980s and 1990s, we can respond to the changes of the last 35 years and adopt new strategies in 2015.”

CAPPS also called for investing corrections savings in programs to better prepare prisoners for release, in support for high-incarceration communities and in services that would improve public outcomes, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment. Justice reinvestment and helping offenders succeed were also strong themes in the Governor’s message.

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