

Michigan Legislature  
Michigan State Capitol  
100 N. Capitol Ave  
Lansing, MI 48933

September 8, 2020

Dear members of the Michigan Legislature,

As pastors and leaders of faith-based organizations that minister and provide services in Michigan, we join together to write you in support of criminal justice reform and restoration of citizens who are detained in jail. Because the good news of Jesus Christ calls the Church to advocate for biblical truth and care for the vulnerable, we, His followers, call for a criminal justice system that is fair and redemptive for our fellow neighbors who are incarcerated and restores people who are reentering society. As Christians, we believe every human being is created in the image of God and should be treated accordingly.

When a person commits criminal acts, it damages our communities and requires proportional accountability measures. However, it is equally important to avoid overreliance on incarceration where it isn't required to serve public safety goals. Even a short stay in a jail or suspending a driver's license can inhibit access to jobs, schools, childcare, and houses of worship, and should be used sparingly.

We commend the efforts of the Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration for their Report and Recommendations, which include: a speedy determination if pretrial incarceration is appropriate; reduces fines and fees from being financial obstacles to avoiding incarceration; driver's license suspension for non-driving offenses should be avoided when possible; and law enforcement should be properly equipped and trained to handle the mental health concerns they encounter.

As our churches and organizations work to reach Michigan communities with a message of hope and redemption, we ask you to consider the following guiding biblical principles as you work to reform the criminal justice system:

- Each human being, including those who commit crime and the victims of crime, is a person made in God's own image, with a life worthy of respect, protection and care;
- Accountability for crime should be community-based and local where possible, recognizing that cultivation of the seedbeds of virtue like families and churches pays dividends in reducing crime;
- Appropriate avenues should be provided for personal transformation and a second chance;
- Punishment should be proportional to the act committed, advancing public safety, fostering accountability, and giving opportunities to make amends;
- Rehabilitation of those formerly incarcerated should include, where not prohibited by public safety concerns, restoration of the rights and privileges previously lost in order to foster their ability to become productive citizens and taxpayers in society.

As we work to preach the good news of the gospel, that redemption through Christ is available to everyone and that His sacrifice covers our sin, we ask that you take hold of these important values and usher in a new season of criminal justice in Michigan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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REMEMBER THOSE IN PRISON

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