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MI-CEMI Opposition Statement to SB 144

The Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration is a broad-based, statewide, non-partisan collaboration representing non-profit, faith-based, advocacy, grassroots, and service organizations united to end mass incarceration in Michigan. The Collaborative seeks to create and restore healthy communities.

MI-CEMI believes that in order to significantly and permanently reduce Michigan's prison population we must reduce the number of people sent to prison, reduce the length of their incarceration, ensure that confinement is conducive to genuine rehabilitation, and prepare and support incarcerated persons as they return to their communities in order to reduce returns for technical violations or new sentences.

As a Collaborative, we are united in our opposition to Senate Bill 144 (Senate Corrections Budget Recommendation) because it fails to accomplish these important goals, and prioritizes short-term savings over both institutional safety and long-term savings accomplished through safely reducing the prison population.

Senate Bill 144 will cut nearly \$65m in current MDOC operations, with approximately \$50m directly impacting existing prison operations. The MDOC could decide to reduce healthcare services, prison staffing, and rehabilitative programming. Such actions would likely increase tension and the potential for violence in the system. In other words, current problems will be exacerbated in order to accomplish savings.

Senate Bill 144 also contains two troubling new expenditures, the reestablishment of the leased jail bed program and the potential purchase of a privately-owned prison facility. The Senate proposal includes \$3.5m in new funding to reestablish the leased bed program, which placed low-level MDOC prisoners, who were predominantly African-American, into rural county jails without access to programming, jobs, or in-person visits for up to two years. The Senate proposal also includes \$4.3m for "Future Facility" transition costs, which many believe is the first step toward the State purchasing the privately owned correctional facility in Lake County at a price of nearly \$100m.

This drastic cut when viewed through the lens of increased expenditures for alternative prison housing options, indicates a plan is afoot to shift the housing of prisoners instead of addressing obvious policy and statutory options which would reduce the prison population.

The Collaborative believes taxpayers should not be forced to support a corporate bailout for a private prison company in the form of purchasing a prison, especially considering the state has several relatively new mothballed prisons available. MI-CEMI supports responsible reductions through safely reducing the prisoner population and lowering the return-to-prison rate. This cannot be accomplished in the irresponsible manner proposed by SB 144.

Prisoners and MDOC staff will bear the brunt of SB 144, as it will exacerbate poor prison conditions and reduce opportunities for rehabilitation. Placing people in overcrowded and unsafe facilities or rural county jails, and bailing out a private prison company does not and cannot create the meaningful reforms supported by MI-CEMI.

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