



P.O. Box 80414 Lansing, MI 48908, Phone: 269-339-0606

[www.micpr.org](http://www.micpr.org) | [micpr.org@gmail.com](mailto:micpr.org@gmail.com)

## 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

### CITIZENS FOR PRISON REFORM

"FAMILIES ARE PUNISHED THROUGH INCARCERATION EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT THE ONES WHO HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OR SENTENCED. THEY EXPERIENCE RESTRICTED RIGHTS, DIMINISHED RESOURCES, SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION...EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE LEGALLY INNOCENT AND RESIDE OUTSIDE THE PRISON'S BOUNDARIES."

MEGAN COMFORT

Citizens for Prison Reform (CPR) is a grass-roots, family-led initiative that engages, educates, and empowers those affected by crime and punishment to advance their constitutional, civil and human rights. It is an organization of prisoners' loved ones and concerned citizens. It assists prisoners' families and friends in navigating the corrections system. It was started in 2011 by a family who experienced a minor being sentenced into MDOC. CPR has held monthly meetings in Lansing since 2011. It's meetings have now become virtual presentations, webinars and break-out sessions for families. It puts on an annual Legislative Education Day which brings together family members, friends, advocates, and Michigan Legislators.

### FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

See last page for financial report. Donations may be made online at [www.micpr.org](http://www.micpr.org) or by mail. CPR greatly appreciates all donations. A sincere thanks to all who have donated.

### OPEN MI DOOR CAMPAIGN



In January 2020, CPR received funding through the Unlock the Box Campaign, to begin the work of ending the use of solitary confinement in MI prisons, jails and juvenile detention facilities. The focus currently is on the prison system. The Michigan campaign has been named *Open MI Door*. A Steering Team has been created, consisting of American Friends Service Committee, MI-CEMI, Disability Rights Michigan, Nation Outside and the ACLU. Senator Chang introduced SB 1060 and 1061 which would limit who could be placed in solitary confinement and for how long. The second bill would create a permanent work group to provide oversight as to the use of solitary confinement. MDOC refers to solitary confinement as segregation or restrictive housing units. Virtual Webinars are being held to bring awareness to this need for change. Watch for an independent Open MI Door Website coming soon!

### HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN THE OPEN MI DOOR CAMPAIGN

Go to [micpr.org/open-mi-door.html](http://micpr.org/open-mi-door.html) and sign the petition to end solitary confinement. This petition is being sent to the governor and will go to the legislators in the future.

Invite organizations to sign the Position Statement for Open MI Door on the same page. If you are a Solitary survivor, please fill out the survey for future use in reporting. You may purchase an Open MI Door T-shirt on the website.

## SOLITARY GARDEN PROJECT



Citizens for Prison Reform has planted its first **Solitary Garden**. This garden is dedicated to all those who have suffered in segregation. We are looking to collaborate with those who are in Solitary Confinement to create more Solitary Gardens throughout Michigan.

If you would like to start a garden or get involved with the Solitary Garden Project, please email [twalker@micpr.org](mailto:twalker@micpr.org)

## Open MI Door First Virtual Webinar



## VIRTUAL MEETINGS

CPR held its last in-person meeting February of 2020. While the in-person socialization and support has been greatly missed, we are grateful to the U of M Ginsberg Center for the opportunity to utilize Zoom to expand CPR's reach and continue educating and supporting families and advocates.

## 2019 ANNUAL MEETING

### *Locked Out: The Impact of Incarceration on Families*

CPR held its Annual Dinner Meeting and held the first screening of *“Locked Out: The Impact of Incarceration on Families”*, a documentary that Michigan families participated that shared how incarceration has impacted their lives. Silent and live auctions were held. CPR would like to thank the University Lutheran Church for the grant funding, making this project possible and for the countless hours Bryce Mackie, Producer, gave to make this powerful documentary.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At the October 2019 Annual Meeting, Three new board members were elected to serve a 3 year term; Rich Rienstra, Rita Kerwin and Sherrie Guess. Others serving on the Board during 2019-20 were Sandy Girard, Monica Jahner, Mark Brown, Martha Simkins and Rich Griffin. Trudy Williams joined the board in April of 2020.

Mora Wilkevicz was elected as President, Pete Letkemann as Vice President, Cindy Shank as Secretary, and Peggy Christian as Treasurer. The Executive Board includes the President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer, Chair of the Financial Committee, Development Committee and Community Outreach Committee. The Executive Board reports to the full Board. Thanks to all for their work on behalf of CPR.

## MONTHLY PROGRAMS 2019-20

Thanks to all presenters and speakers for our in-person meetings and our new virtual webinars.

**October, 2019** CPR hosted a dinner, and showed its first screening of *“Locked Out: The Impact of Prison on Families”* This documentary shares the stories and experiences of Michigan families with incarcerated loved ones. Live and silent Auctions were held to raise funds for CPR.

**November, 2019** Ingham County jail presentation by Sheriff Wriggelsworth, who shared information on the new jail and his efforts to move to a more rehabilitative model.

### December 2019 and January 2020

Meetings were not held due to the Holidays and weather.

**February, 2020** Keith Barber, Legislative Ombudsman’s presented, sharing with families and advocates what the Ombudsman’s office does and how they can be of assistance if families or those inside have situations arise.

**March and April 2020** meetings were cancelled due to Covid-19. Legislative Day, which was scheduled for the end of April was also cancelled.

### May 2020 – PRISONER FAMILY AWARENESS MONTH (Virtual)

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>MAY 09</b><br>SAT 4:00PM  | <b>SEPARATED BY "THE SENTENCE"</b><br>LIVE TRAILER SCREENING OF OSCAR AWARD WINNING FILM "THE SENTENCE" FOLLOWED BY AN INTERVIEW WITH CINDY SHANK          |
| <b>MAY 13</b><br>WED 2:00PM  | <b>MI FAMILY INCLUSION</b><br>PRESENTATIONS BY THE FAMILY ADVISORY BOARD, MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND THE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE                    |
| <b>MAY 21</b><br>THUR 5:30PM | <b>FAMILY LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY</b><br>EMPOWERING FAMILIES TO SHARE THEIR STORIES AND BRING ABOUT CHANGE WITH POLICY MAKERS                                 |
| <b>MAY 31</b><br>SUN 5:30PM  | <b>LOCKED OUT: THE IMPACT OF PRISON ON FAMILIES</b><br>LIVE SCREENING OF CPR'S DOCUMENTARY FOLLOWED BY A PANEL DISCUSSION OF FAMILIES FEATURED IN THE FILM |

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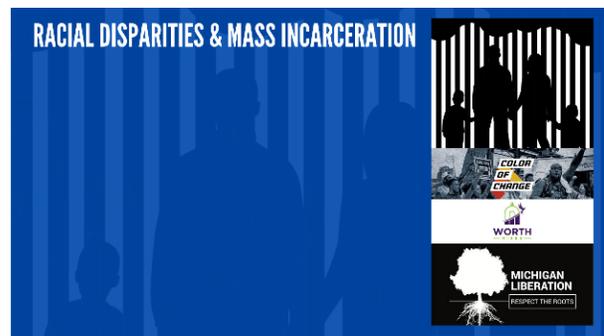
CPR planned weekly virtual events for the month of **May 2020**, bringing awareness to Prisoner Families and journeys.

**Week 1 - Separated by the Sentence**, featuring Cindy Shank and her story of missing her children grow up while serving in a federal prison. Cindy lives in Lansing.

**Week 2 - MI Family Inclusion**, Trudy Williams, CPR Board Member moderated with panelists Kyle Kaminski, MDOC Legislative Liaison and Reentry Director and Keith Barber, Ombudsman sharing information on changes since Covid-19, and provided general MDOC information.

**Week 3 – Family Legislative Advocacy** Webinar with Senator Chang joining the presentation to share the importance of family legislative advocacy.

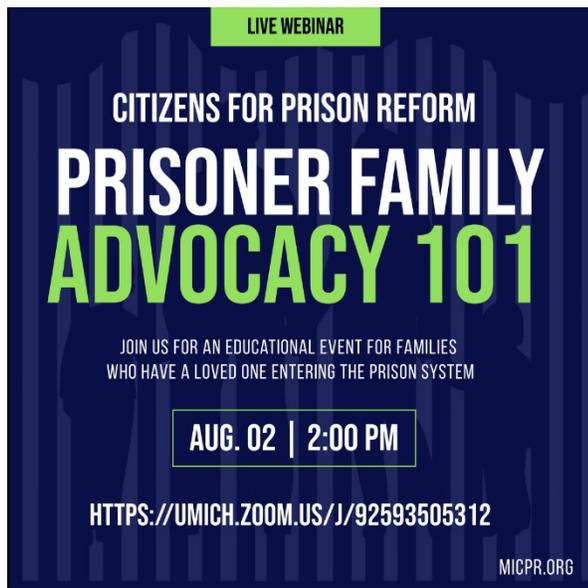
**Week 4 - The documentary “Locked Out: The Impact of Prison on Families”** was shared through a webinar and on Facebook live. A panel of families who were a part of the documentary were interviewed at the end of the film.



**June, 2020** Tiffany Walker, CPR’s Communications and Outreach Organizer moderated this event with panelists from Color of Change, Michigan Liberation, and Worth Rises, who spoke to the issue of racial disparities and how it has impacted mass incarceration.

**August, 2020** CPR began hosting virtual Family Advocacy 101 Series. The first one was on general advocacy, to assist new families and those who are unaware of their ability to advocate.

**September, 2020** CPR hosted its second Family Advocacy 101 Series: Helping Your Loved One Through the Parole Process. Future Family Advocacy 101 Series are being planned for 2021.



### **Detroit Event – January 2020**

CPR held a screening of the “Locked Out: The Impact of Prison on Families” in Detroit, hosted by Team Wellness. Plans were to show the documentary in Grand Rapids, and in various locations throughout the Lansing region, but Covid-19 changed these plans.

### **CPR STAFF**

CPR has hired Lois Pullano as part-time Executive Director, and four part-time contracted staff, Tiffany Walker is Outreach and Communications Organizer, Timia Williams is Administrative Assistant, Michelle Weemhoff is Program Consultant and Tim Cowley is Bookkeeper.

### **2019-20 CPR PRIORITIES**

Each year CPR focuses on a few issues that are important to prisoners’ families. The 2019-20 priorities center on Making Family Support a Priority.

### **Establish a formal MDOC Family Advisory Board –SB 195**

Sponsor: Rep. Stephanie Chang

This bill would require MDOC to create a Family Reunification Policy. The Family Advisory Board would be permanently established as a part of this policy. The Board has been meeting since 2015, but is at the pleasure of MDOC. The FAB currently has 14 members.

- A pilot Family Advisory Board currently works with MDOC Administration to:
- Work to bring changes to practices and policies to increase rehabilitative treatment;
- Provide ways to improve family visitation and support statewide;
- Present concerns affecting families with incarcerated loved ones; and
- Address barriers to families supporting their loved ones.

### **Limit solitary confinement to 15 days at a time and only for cases of a serious disciplinary violation**

- Colorado, which adopted this policy in 2017, has seen a reduction of assaults, forced cell entries, and the use of heavy restraints decline by 40 percent. The results of these reforms have been positive for both staff and prisoners.<sup>1</sup>
- Research has shown that housing someone in a cell the size of a parking space for 20 or more hours per day for extended periods of time damages them both mentally and physically. Since most people who go to prison — 97 percent — return to their community, that means we were releasing people back into their communities in worse shape than when they arrived.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rick Raemis, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections. (December 8, 2018). “Why I ended the horror of long-term solitary confinement in Colorado’s prisons.” Accessed:

<https://www.greeleytribune.com/opinion/rick-raemis-why-i-ended-the-horror-of-long-term-solitary-in-colorados-prisons/>

## Remove restrictions on visits as punishment for misconducts

- Administrative Rules allow the MDOC Director to restrict visits as a form of punishment. Visitor restrictions for misconduct unrelated to a visit is not supporting family reunification. *Administrative Rule (R. 791.6609 Rule 609 (11) (d) and R. 791.6614 Rule 614 (d))*
- Numerous studies show that family and community support is critical to success in prison and upon reentry. Taking visits for misconduct unrelated to visits is counterproductive. Denying visits punishes innocent children, families and community mentors and impedes reentry.

## INTERNATIONAL PRISONER'S FAMILY CONFERENCE



CPR sent Sandra Girard, Pete Letkemann, Mark and Lois Pullano to represent it at the 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference held in Dallas, Texas.

## CPR FACEBOOK PAGE

CPR's Facebook page has information about CPR activities and meetings, notices of related events held by other organizations and corrections and criminal justice reform efforts from around the country. CPR has 6,479 likes currently. The week of Oct. 17-23<sup>rd</sup> it had a 9,455 post reach and 8,483 followers of CPR's page! A huge thank you to Tiffany Walker and Pete Letkemann for managing CPR's Facebook page.

## WEBSITE - [WWW.MICPR.ORG](http://www.micpr.org)

CPR's website been transformed over the last year by Tiffany Walker, Communications and Outreach Organizer. It has information about meetings, links to related web sites and helpful organizations, CPR's Resource Guide for

Families, a resource page with specific forms, documents, reentry resources and currently holds the Open MI Door page. Over the last 30 days, there were 353 unique visitors and 644 page views. There were 44 individuals who used the website contact form in 2020 to request assistance or connect with CPR.

CPR is grateful for the grants from the University Lutheran Church of East Lansing, which have allowed videos of CPR's monthly programs to be made available on the website.

## EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS

Notices about CPR's meetings and other state-wide events are sent monthly via Mailchimp. At the end of October 984 people were on CPR's e-mail list. If you do not currently receive them go to <http://www.micpr.org> and sign up. You will receive an e-mail to return for verification. Thanks to volunteers Jeremy Leik and Tiffany Walker for managing Mailchimp.

## CPR NEWSLETTER

Frank Dennis is currently publishing a monthly newsletter under CPR. The newsletter can be obtained on our website, or emailing Frank at [fdennis805@gmail.com](mailto:fdennis805@gmail.com) It is released at the end of each month.

## SHIRTS FOR SALE!

You can support CPR's work by purchasing a shirt. We also have Open MI Door shirts available. These shirts may be purchased on the website.



## **FAMILY ADVISORY BOARD**

CPR established the Family Advisory Board in 2015. Since Covid-19, the FAB has begun to meet on a monthly basis with MDOC Legislative Liaison, Kyle Kaminski to bring the family perspective to the forefront and to advocate for changes in policies affecting family inclusion and reunification during and after incarceration, as well as working towards more rehabilitative treatment.

Pete Letkemann served as the FAB Board Chair from 2018 until August of 2020. Trudy Williams is now Chair of the FAB Board. The Board currently has 14 members who have lived experience in dealing with the prison system.

Families can contact the Board and provide input and solutions to issues by going to the Family Advisory Board tab on CPR's website and fill out the form. These issues will then be discussed by the board and put on a list to take to the monthly MDOC meeting.



## **CPR SINCERELY THANKS:**

The University Lutheran Church for the generous funding they granted us that enabled us to do outreach, and allowed us to create "Locked Out: The Impact of Prison on Families.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing for their support and space for CPR's Annual Meeting event.

The Calvary Lutheran Church of Lansing for sharing its space with CPR when we held in-person monthly meetings.

CPR would like to thank the additional new funders for their support of CPR's projects and campaigns: Beckwith Fund, Michigan Justice Fund, Resist, Unlock the Box Campaign and private donors who have supported our work.

CPR and FAB members are grateful to Senator Chang for sponsorship of SB195, which will create a MDOC Family Reunification Policy. The Family Advisory Board would be established permanently under this bill.



## **DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED!**

CPR is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations to it are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Donations may be made online at [www.micpr.org](http://www.micpr.org) or by mail to P.O. Box 80414, Lansing, MI 48908. Receipts for donations are sent out in early January of the year following the donation.



## **VOLUNTEERS WELCOME**

If you would like to volunteer to assist CPR by becoming a Family Advocate, assist with research or other projects please email [twalker@micpr.org](mailto:twalker@micpr.org)