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June 20, 2018

Mr. John Doe
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City, State Zip

Dear John,

Thank you for all of your letters and correspondence. We are excited to update you the work we've been doing. This year's legislative session has now closed, and we have a lot to share!

Since our last letter, the Restore Justice team has been busy training new advocates and advancing new legislation. We continue to press for the beginning of a return of a parole system in Illinois, and we supported a bill this year to expand visiting rights. And, we worked with John Howard Association on an effort to eliminate the \$5 co-pay inmates pay for medical and dental visits. Finally, we have joined with several other organizations to promote a bill that would create a process for inmates to have their sentences changed retroactively as new laws pass. More details on each of these bills--and their current status--are provided below.

We've also spent more energy these last few months fighting a regressive turn in our state politics and media. In response to a bump in carjackings around Chicago, lawmakers in Springfield passed new legislation that would allow law enforcement to arrest and detain minors for motor vehicle theft without proof or evidence of wrongdoing. Restore Justice and the criminal justice reform community in Chicago are strongly opposed to the bill, which has not yet been signed.

Then, in April, after the Prisoner Review Board granted parole to a 77-year-old man who served 45 years and was denied parole nineteen previous times. The Chicago Tribune responded with an alarming op-ed that un-ironically suggested a return to the death penalty. And in an alarming move, a group of seven State's Attorneys delivered a letter to Speaker Michael Madigan and the General Assembly asking that they oppose any efforts to restore parole in Illinois, resorting to fears and disprovable myths to advance their case.

As always, your letters help us discern our focus and better understand the issues that matter most. Please keep them coming! We are honored that you continue to entrust us with your stories and are grateful for your voices and support. *One reminder: we are a very small staff devoted to legislative efforts to change the system. We do not have a legal staff nor can we address individual issues.*

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jobi Cates".

Jobi Cates & your friends and allies at Restore Justice

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

This year, a number of important bills related to criminal justice and sentencing have been introduced. Many are being actively debated in the Illinois General Assembly. Here is the current status of those bills we most relevant to our mission of reforming the prison and criminal justice systems in Illinois to be more compassionate and just.

Key Bills for Restore Justice this Session

	SB 3228 / HB 531 SA1	HB 4741	HB 5104	HB 4828/ HB 1804 SA1
Sponsors	Sen. Don Harmon / Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie & Rep. Lindsay Parkhurst	Rep. Justin Slaughter	Rep. Carol Ammons	Rep. Kelly Cassidy / Sen. Toi Hutchinson
Details	Allows most individuals who enter prison for offenses committed before age 21 to earn parole after serving 10 or 20 years	Increases the number of visits inmates may receive, increases the number of visitors allowed on visit lists, require digital records of lists	Eliminates the \$5 co-pay inmates must pay for medical and dental appointments	Create a process for inmates to request that reforms and new laws applied to their sentences retroactively
Status	AWAITS votes in the House and Senate	PASSED in the House and Senate; AWAITS Governor signature	PASSED in the House and Senate; AWAITS Governor signature	AWAITS a vote in the House and Senate

- **SB 3228 / HB 531 on Meaningful Opportunities for Review and Parole of Young Adults**

Restoring parole remains our first priority. This year, we aimed to pass SB 3228 in the Senate and HB 531 SA1 in the House.

The legislation provides up to three parole hearings to individuals who entered prison for offenses committed before age 21. Individuals become eligible for parole release after serving 10 or 20 years, depending on their offense. Under the bill, the Prison Review Board must consider the hallmark features of youth in its parole assessments and--in cases where parole is not granted--provide a written statement detailing the reasons for a denial. It also gives inmates seeking parole the right to an attorney.

Over the last few sessions, the bill sponsors and Restore Justice worked with both the State's Attorneys Association and victims rights groups to craft a version of the bill that these groups would not directly oppose (why? because legislation without their neutrality or support would not have enough votes to pass). After negotiation, we arrived at the current version of the bill.

While it does not include everything we ultimately know should be, we believe the bill has a fair chance of both passing and paving the way for more inclusive and expansive future reforms.

This year, seven of Illinois' 102 State's Attorneys have split from the State's Attorneys Association to oppose SB 3228. In a letter shared with all members of the General Assembly, these seven attorneys argue that restoring parole to individuals convicted of violent crimes is a mistake. Many of the claims the attorneys make in their letter are not based in fact, and appeal to fear over reason in order to scare legislators into voting down reform. In response, Restore Justice issued a rebuttal of their letter, and asked our colleague organizations to sign on. **A copy of that letter is included.**

We're also aware of ongoing efforts to advance a separate parole bill that differs from our own in a number of ways. While Restore Justice will continue to focus on passing SB 3228 / HB 531, we are thrilled to be joined in our fight to restore meaningful parole in Illinois by others advocates and are heartened to learn incarcerated people are involved in the effort.

- HB 4741 on Expanded Visiting Rights**
This year, Restore Justice helped support a bill that would expand visiting rights for inmates and their families. HB 4741, sponsored by Rep. Justin Slaughter, allows inmates up to 7 visits per month, up from a max of 5 at some facilities. The bill also allows inmates to add more names to their visiting lists, from 20 to 30, and requires that the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) begin carrying lists electronically.
- HB 5104 on Elimination of Medical Co-Pay**
In collaboration with the John Howard Association (JHA), Restore Justice helped support a bill that would eliminate the \$5 co-pay inmates currently pay for their medical and dental appointments. HB 5104, sponsored by Rep. Carol Ammons, abolishes this co-pay at both IDOC and Department of Juvenile Justice facilities.
- HB 4828 / HB 1804 SA1 on Retroactive Application of Criminal Justice Reforms**
Making criminal justice reforms apply retroactively is a major policy priority for not just Restore Justice but the entire reform community. Without retroactivity, thousands of men, women, and children receive no relief from reforms and continue to bear the burden of outdated laws even as societal values change.

This year, a set of bills--HB 4828, sponsored by Rep. Cassidy; and HB 1804 SA1, sponsored by Sen. Hutchinson--intends to resolve this issue by introducing a process for individuals to request hearings for possible resentencing when new laws pass that reduce criminal penalties in some way. This includes both reductions in prison time following changes in sentencing policy and the sealing or retroactive modification of criminal records if laws decriminalize certain crimes or re-categorize certain felonies as misdemeanors.

This bill may sound familiar. Last year, a nearly identical version of this policy was advanced last year, with one major flaw: the bill gave prosecuting attorneys the power to reject requests that they disagreed with on principle. Advocates for meaningful reform rightly identified that this requirement would critically diminish the power of the bill to produce meaningful sentencing changes and fought hard to stop the bill from passing.

We know this is an incredibly important issue for many incarcerated people. That's why Restore Justice and a number of our allies--including Communities United, the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, and Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI)--are working hard to educate lawmakers about the bill and building public support for the idea of retroactivity.

We aren't quite there yet, but we believe the work we're doing is moving Illinois closer to paving a comprehensive path to retroactivity in criminal justice reforms.

OTHER RESOURCES

Restore Justice regrets that we are unable to provide help with individual cases, as our current focus lies specifically in creating sustainable policy change. If you require assistance, we highly encourage you to reach out to one of the partner organizations below.

LEGAL AID

Cabrini Green Legal Aid

740 N. Milwaukee Ave
Chicago, IL 60645
(312) 738-2452

INNOCENCE CLAIMS

Chicago Innocence Project

205 W. Monroe St, Suite 315
Chicago, IL 60606
(312) 263-6213

POST-RELEASE SERVICES

The Safer Foundation

571 W. Jackson
Chicago, IL 60661
(312) 922-2200

St. Leonard's Ministries

2100 W. Warren Blvd
Chicago, IL 60612
(312) 738-1414 x. 24

PRISON CONDITION CASES

ACLU of Illinois

180 N. Michigan Ave, #2300
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 201-9740

The John Howard Association

PO BOX 10042
Chicago, IL 60610
(312) 291-9183

Uptown People's Law Center

4413 N. Sheridan
Chicago, IL 60640

RESTORE JUSTICE STAFF AND ACTIVITIES

Since our last letter, the Restore Justice team has been advancing projects and activities that fall outside of our directly policy-related work.

In February, Marshan Allen--one of our Board Members at Restore Justice and a formerly incarcerated person--submitted and had published in the Chicago Tribune an op-ed that argued for the restoration of a parole system for youth in Illinois.



QUESTIONS? CALL 1-800-TRIBUNE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2018 BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Why Illinois needs to restore parole for juvenile lifers

BY MARSHAN T. ALLEN

In 1992, I was convicted on two counts of first-degree murder at age 15. I had stolen the car my two co-defendants drove the day they shot and killed two teenagers in a drug dispute. Because of that serious crime, I was considered as guilty for murder as my two co-defendants under Illinois law.

In Illinois, the only possible sentence for double homicide is life without parole. Before 2012, this applied to children, even in cases where a person is involved in the murder but did not "pull the trigger."

I accept responsibility for my part in the horrible crime that resulted in the deaths of Elroy Gaston and Jerome DeBarry. Over the 26 years I spent in prison, I had to accept that I would pay the adult price for my actions. That acceptance helped me become a more constructive person and pursue educational opportunities.

Most important, my growth in prison was supported by other

men who had accepted responsibility for their actions, felt remorse and chose to walk the path of becoming better people.

In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Miller v. Alabama case that sentencing children to serve mandatory life without parole was unconstitutional. It was later confirmed that anyone currently serving that sentence -- 80 of us in Illinois -- were to be resentenced.

In the early days of my prison time, I felt unfortunate to have received the most severe sentence possible. But since Miller, I have come to believe that I was extremely lucky.

The Miller decision was painfully narrow. If instead of life if I had received a sentence of 40, 90 or even 120 years, I would still be behind bars. Unlike most other states, Illinois does not have parole-for-release or time off for good behavior for serious crimes.

Hundreds in Illinois who enter prison for offenses before age 18 still face the prospect of spending



JOHN SMIERCIAK/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The author at age 31 at Western Illinois Correctional Center in 2007.

huge portions of their lives behind bars -- more each month -- with no chance to earn release. Most do not qualify for a new sentence under Miller even if they have grown beyond the worst acts they committed as children and are ready to make amends for some of the pain they caused.

Shouldn't the truly rehabilitated also receive an opportunity to earn release? And how much better could kids coming into the adult prison system do if they had a real incentive to change?

This year, Illinois has the chance to provide parole opportunities to children entering adult prisons in the state. A bill under

consideration in the Illinois General Assembly reinstates limited parole opportunities for children facing sentences longer than 10 years.

This bill does not guarantee release and will ensure that victims, witnesses and others have a chance to voice concerns at each parole hearing. And juveniles who were convicted of the most serious crimes will need to serve at least 20 years before they can request a review.

I cannot take back my actions as a teenager. But today, I'm able to devote my life to helping others and living as a constructive citizen. I owe what I have to the second chance I was given to make something of my life: All I hope to do now is to give others that same opportunity.

Marshan T. Allen, a former juvenile lifer in Illinois, is working with Restore Justice Illinois to help pass legislation that would bring parole back to Illinois for children who have committed serious crimes.

Restore Justice Board Member and formerly incarcerated juvenile lifer Marshan Allen, published in a February issue of the Chicago Tribune.

In April, a group comprised of Restore Justice Board Members, staff, and friends traveled to Menard Correctional Center in southern Illinois to visit a number of inmates. For some members of the group, the trip was their first visit to a maximum security prison and their first time visiting an inmate. Then, in May, Restore Justice covered the transportation costs for a trip to Menard organized by the Communities and Relatives of Illinois Incarcerated Children (CRIIC), a support group for families with loved ones behind bars.

Restore Justice plans to organize more of these visiting trips in the future, so that more people understand the toll that long sentences exacts not just from incarcerated people but also their loved ones and families.



Advocates and families of incarcerated people on the steps of the Illinois General Assembly after a day of fighting for the restoration of parole.

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Restore Justice continues to conduct advocacy trainings to empower more people in Illinois to fight for crucial policy issues. Our last training in early March was our largest yet, and we look forward to expanding our reach with more trainings in the coming months.



Newly trained advocates and RJ team members Jobi Cates and Julie Anderson pose for a photo after a successful Advocacy Training!

Finally, we've expanded our online presence, adding an educational "Know More" series on criminal justice concepts--from firearm enhancements and truth-in-sentencing to understanding recidivism--and a new reentry resources page for returning citizens.

CONTEST UPDATE: A WINNING DESIGN FOR OUR T-SHIRT CONTEST!

In our last letter, Restore Justice announced a contest to design a piece of art to showcase on our advocacy T-shirts. The theme of the contest was **Second Chances**. Many advocacy groups use vibrant shirts with compelling designs to spark conversation with lawmakers.

In total, Restore Justice received over a dozen fantastic designs. The winning design, by Shaun Fogle at Illinois River, has now been transformed into a T-shirt for our advocacy. For visibility reasons, we adapted the design so that it would stand out on a printed shirt, which you can check out below.



Thank you to all the artists who submitted designs! We are incredibly grateful to have had the chance to see and enjoy your contributions.