



April 8, 2022

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Criminal Justice Reform Caucus' FY23 Budget Priorities

Dear Chair Michlewitz:

As Co-chairs of the Criminal Justice Reform Caucus, we are writing to express our support for the inclusion of the following items in the FY23 House Ways and Means Budget:

Re-entry and Education Programming:

- **Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant (7002-2021):** include \$30M for the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant (CERG) to develop, strengthen, and invest in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system. These funds would invest in job training, creation, and placement for those who face high barriers to employment, as well as community-based high school dropout prevention and re-engagement programs, small business development, housing stabilization services, addiction treatment, and trauma-informed mental health care.

- **Higher Education Programming (8900-1100):** include \$87K to support the DOC's partnerships with higher education institutions that provide post-secondary education programs in state prisons. Post-secondary correctional education (PSCE) has been found to be one of the most cost-effective ways to decrease recidivism, improve relations with correctional staff, chances of employment post-release, decrease disciplinary infractions and racial tension behind bars, and increase morale. We support and appreciate Rep. Khan's advocacy around this line item.

- **Restorative Justice (8000, xxxx):** include \$400K for a community-based restorative justice grant program that serves low-income, underserved communities and is administered by EOPSS, in consultation with the restorative justice advisory committee established under M.G.L. Section 5, Chapter 276B.

Removing Supervision Fees for Parole and Probation: we encourage the House Committee on Ways and Means to include the recommendations put forth by the Commission on Structural Racism in the Parole Process, the Commission on Structural Racism in the Massachusetts Probation Service, and Section 70 and 71 as proposed in Governor Baker's H.2, which would eliminate supervision fees for individuals sentenced to parole or probation.

Transitional Housing:

- **Residential Re-Entry Programs (0339-1011):** include \$9,640,888 for a grant program administered by the Office of the Commissioner of Probation for community-based residential re-entry programs to reduce recidivism by providing transitional housing, workforce development and case management to individuals returning to the community from county correctional facilities and state prisons.
- **New Beginnings Re-Entry Services:** include \$1.5M for New Beginnings Re-Entry Services so that they might continue their work to reduce recidivism by advocating for and providing services to women who are re-entering local neighborhoods and communities.

Juvenile Court Clinics (5055-0000): include \$12,697,923 to retain and recruit highly specialized clinical staff.

Dual Generation Supports for High-Risk Young Parents (4401-1003): include \$4M for intensive case management and trauma support for high-risk young parents and their children

Prisoners' Legal Services (0321-2100): Include \$2,646,567.66 for Prisoners' Legal Services (PLS). PLS provides civil legal assistance to people who are incarcerated in Massachusetts state prisons and in county jails or houses of correction. With focuses on health and mental health care, guard-on-prisoner violence, physical conditions of confinement, and segregation and isolation, PLS promotes the safe, humane and lawful treatment of Massachusetts prisoners through civil rights litigation, administrative advocacy, client counseling, and outreach to policy makers and the public.

Committee for Public Counsel Services (0321-1500), (0321-1510), (0321-1520): Include the following amounts for CPCS line items so they might continue their work providing legal representation for residents of the Commonwealth who are unable to afford an attorney in all matters in which the law requires the appointment of counsel:

- **(0321-1500):** \$79,011.13
- **(0321-1510):** \$217,486,045
- **(0321-1520):** \$30,165,014

Section 35: We oppose the proposed \$21.9M for the DOC's MASAC facility (8900-0002) and \$2.5M for the Section 35 facility operated by the Hampden County Sheriff's Department (8910-0104). We request that these funds instead be expended on urgently needed community treatment programs and, as necessary, Section 35 programs licensed or approved by the Departments of Public Health and Mental Health. We are requesting that the \$14M proposed for "service improvements" for civilly committed men (1599-1214) is directed towards health care facilities, rather than correctional settings. Additionally, we are deeply disturbed by DCAMM's intentions to spend \$36M for upgrades to MASAC. Rather, we encourage the House Committee on Ways and Means to use H.2066, *An Act ensuring access to addiction services*,

introduced by Rep. Balsler, as a guidepost for ensuring that all those committed under Section 35 receive treatment in health care settings licensed or approved by DPH or DMH.

Communications: Finally, we are requesting the House Committee on Ways and Means to allocate funding to allow for free phone calls to and from correctional facilities so that incarcerated constituents can stay connected with their loved ones, as provided in S.1559/H.1900, sponsored by Sen. Creem and Rep. Tyler.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Please contact our offices with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary S. Keefe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Mary S. Keefe, Co-chair
Criminal Justice Reform Caucus
State Representative
15th Worcester District

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James B. Eldridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

James B. Eldridge, Co-chair
Criminal Justice Reform Caucus
State Senator
Middlesex and Worcester District