



## ACLU's Coalition for Smart Justice Announces Criminal Justice Reform Priorities for 2020

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WILMINGTON, Del. — The ACLU of Delaware's Coalition for Smart Justice is ready to take on the second half of the 150<sup>th</sup> General Assembly's legislative session.

The Coalition for Smart Justice is a statewide group of organizations and individuals who advocate for a criminal justice system that fosters public safety by reducing mass incarceration, recidivism and racial disparities. Through legislative reform, public education, community organizing and grass roots advocacy the Coalition challenges policy makers to create change that will have a significant positive impact on individuals, families and communities.

In the first half of the 150<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, 11 important "Smart Justice" bills were signed into law, and several more bills were introduced and remain pending. The flurry of activity in the 2019 session was the most ambitious criminal justice reform effort Delaware has seen in decades – establishing a solid foundation for real, meaningful reform in the First State. Several of the bills that passed addressed key Coalition priority areas, including:

- SB 37, a bill that expands access to expungement for adults,
- HB 5, a bill that returns discretion to judges by expanding concurrent sentencing and eliminating mandatory consecutive sentencing for many crimes, and
- SB 47, a drug reform bill that reduces sentencing disparities for convictions in the city by eliminating sentence enhancements that apply more often to urban residents, removes sentence aggravators for prior convictions, and changes the weight tiers for controlled substance offenses to reflect actual use patterns.

But while these are important beginnings, there remains more hard work to be done. The second half of the General Assembly's legislative session is just around the corner, and legislators should know that their constituents are still hungry for transformative change.

At their last meeting, members of the Coalition for Smart Justice voted on six areas of criminal justice reform to be the focus of the next year's legislative and advocacy efforts. These are natural next steps to protect and expand on the progress made in 2019:

- **Fines, Fees & Drivers' License Suspensions** - End the criminalization of poverty that has trapped many people in a punitive cycle by allowing the court to consider a person's

ability to pay court fines and fees, and stop the automatic suspension of drivers' licenses where someone is unable to pay,

- **Data Collection & Transparency**- Collect and publish data to understand racial disparities, measure policy impacts and inform better policy choices,
- **Sentencing Reform** - Eliminate most mandatory minimums and expand opportunities for sentence modification and early release,
- **Pretrial Reform** - Reduce the number of people in prison before they've been convicted of a crime and ensure fairness through the pre-trial process from arrest to trial,
- **Probation Reform** - End the revolving door to prison by implementing post-release policies that promote success after incarceration, and
- **Treating Children as Children** - House all children in juvenile facilities and increase the minimum age at which children can be prosecuted criminally.

The second half of this legislative session kicks off in January, and the Coalition is ramping up in anticipation. Please visit [www.aclu-de.org/en/coalition-for-smart-justice](http://www.aclu-de.org/en/coalition-for-smart-justice) for more information about the Coalition, our priorities, and ways that you can get involved in the Smart Justice movement.

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