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ACLU Unveils New Report on Delaware Probation System Findings Demonstrate Need for Officials to Reform System Now

WILMINGTON: The American Civil Liberties Union of Delaware released *Delaware's Broken Probation System: The Urgent Need to Reform Community Supervision in the First State*, a new comprehensive analysis of Delaware's probation system and how it fuels mass incarceration. The report details how probation rules fail to adequately rehabilitate people in the justice system by promoting a culture of punishment that leads far too many people back to prison. All findings from the report, as well as personal stories of those impacted by the probation system, can be found on the ACLU of Delaware's new website for the initiative: www.peoplenotprobation.com.

"Delaware has the eighth highest rate of people on probation in the United States, which has led to a revolving door of people leaving prison only to return back," said Javonne Rich, policy advocate, ACLU of Delaware. "The vast majority of those sent back to prison from probation are for minor technical violations, not for committing new crimes. This creates a justice system that sets people up to fail, rather than for successful rehabilitation."

The ACLU's report calls for significant changes to be made by legislators, probation officials, and state and local leaders, including:

- End Operation Safe Streets and the Governor's Task Force
- Eliminate probation sentences for minor convictions
- Stop incarcerating people for technical violations
- Customize probation terms to meet individual needs
- Measure the probation department's success by its ability to keep people on probation from incarceration
- Collect and publish race data
- Invest in community-based reentry programs to provide formerly incarcerated people the help they need
- Limit probation terms to one year

"Every person sent back to prison is a failure for our justice system, and ends up costing Delaware taxpayers even more," said Mike Brickner, executive director, ACLU of Delaware. "If Delaware reduced its number of probation violations by 60 percent and cut the average length of time on probation by half, the state would achieve at least \$37 million in savings



by 2025. In times of fiscal crisis, those dollars are even more important and can go to our schools, social services, and economic development.”

Through personal stories of those impacted by the probation system, the report also makes clear the toll that the system plays on the lives of formerly incarcerated people and their families.

“We need a probation system that builds people up, not one that ruins lives,” said Dubard McGriff, Smart Justice campaign organizer, ACLU of Delaware. “Programs like Operation Safe Streets and the Governor’s Task Force partner probation officers with local law enforcement to conduct warrantless searches of people on probation and their families. Many times this surveillance falls disproportionately on Black communities. These programs undermine the community’s trust in law enforcement and funnel more people back to prison.”

This press release can be found online here:

<https://www.aclu-de.org/en/press-releases/aclu-unveils-new-report-delaware-probation-system>

The full report can be found online here:

https://www.aclu-de.org/sites/default/files/probation_report_final.pdf

You can visit our new, interactive website here:

<https://www.peoplenotprobation.com/>