



LEGISLATORS: DELAWARE FAITH LEADERS ARE ASKING YOU TO SUPPORT SMART JUSTICE AND END MASS INCARCERATION IN OUR STATE-NOW.

“We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation.....I believe it's necessary to recognize that we all need mercy, we all need justice, and perhaps we all need some measure of unmerited grace.”

—BRYAN STEVENSON
*Just Mercy: A Story of
Justice and Redemption*

We are Delaware faith leaders who support the goal of the Delaware Campaign for Smart Justice: **to reduce mass incarceration and address racial bias in the criminal justice system.**

Delaware's prisons rank third in the nation in prison overcrowding at 150% of design capacity, exceeded only by Alabama and Nebraska. This extreme overcrowding has rendered our prisons unsafe for both staff and prisoners and seriously impedes effective rehabilitation. The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) is currently sending prisoners to Pennsylvania at an annual cost of approximately \$14 million, which is a short-term fix but far from a permanent solution.

No one should end up in prison because of a lack of mental health or addiction treatment, or an inability to pay fines or fees – but that's what's happening. Our society has come to depend on prisons as the solution to addiction and mental health problems with little diversion for treatment programs. We also incarcerate people who can't pay bail or fines and fees, creating a debtor's prison in Delaware.

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world and Delaware exceeds the national average. Only 13 states exceed Delaware's rate of incarceration and they are all southern states. African American's represent only 23% of Delaware's population but 60% of our prison population is black.

“The real problem with the prisons of mass incarceration in America is precisely that they are inhumane and incapable of respecting human dignity. We badly need a national commitment to restoring humanity to our prisons. At a minimum that will require reducing the chronic overcrowding that exists in more states than not, by dismantling the web of state laws that indiscriminately send people to prison and extend prison sentences beyond all rational penal purposes, despite the grave risk of prolonged incarceration on mental and physical health.”

Jonathan Simon is a professor of law and author of *Mass Incarceration on Trial*

As faith leaders, we believe that mass incarceration is wrong. Now is the time for Delaware to join many other states which are reforming the justice system. **New Jersey has reduced its prison population by almost 40% during the past two decades and their crime rate is half that of Delaware.**

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IS
NECESSARY AND EFFECTIVE-NOW IS
THE TIME TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.**

