



CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY COMMISSION

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July 10, 2019

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Representing Circuit Court Judges

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*Representing the Michigan Association of
Community Corrections Advisory Boards*

Members of the Michigan Legislature:

The Michigan Criminal Justice Policy Commission (CJPC) was statutorily established in 2015 to collect, analyze, and distribute information about sentencing, incarceration, recidivism, and other criminal justice outcomes. Composed of legislative members and representatives from across the criminal justice and legal systems, the CJPC serves as an objective, nonpartisan advisory body that can marshal evidence and provide data-driven recommendations about crime policy to the Michigan legislature.

Pursuant to MCL 769.33a, the CJPC will expire on September 30, 2019. As members of the CJPC, we are united in our belief that continuing the Commission is critically important for Michigan. **We urge the Michigan legislature to extend the sunset and enable the CJPC to continue our work.**

Throughout the United States, sentencing guidelines were established to ensure consistency and proportionality in sentencing and to reduce sentencing disparities. Michigan enacted its statutory sentencing guidelines in 1998 under advisement of the Michigan Sentencing Commission. Following disbandment of the Sentencing Commission in 2002, no entity existed to evaluate whether Michigan's sentencing guidelines were achieving these goals until the creation of the CJPC.

The CJPC has worked to fulfill its legislative mandate by:

- Evaluating strengths and weaknesses of state criminal justice databases and making recommendations for integrated statewide data systems.
- Establishing operational definitions of "recidivism," "technical parole violation," and "technical probation violation" that subsequently were adopted by the legislature.
- Providing the legislature with a report, "The Cost of Raising the Age of Juvenile Justice in Michigan," detailing the fiscal impact of extending juvenile court jurisdiction to age 17.
- Analyzing the state sentencing guidelines through a series of reports examining straddle-cell sentencing disparities.

The CJPC has unique strengths. More than a sentencing commission, the CJPC is authorized to evaluate a broad range of policy issues that affect defendants in circuit, probate, and district courts; individuals detained and incarcerated in jails and prisons; and formerly incarcerated persons returning to their communities. The current Commissioners are experienced and knowledgeable stakeholders who are invested in and fully committed to this work. Within its existing budget, the CJPC employs a full-time data analyst who develops and prepares the Commission's technical reports. Also, the new Chair is a criminologist with expertise in criminal justice policy evaluation. All of these factors position the CJPC as an especially useful resource for the legislature.

Michigan currently is experiencing significant bipartisan and bicameral support for criminal justice reform legislation. The CJPC can serve as a mechanism for assessing and evaluating the impact of these new initiatives. Moreover, the CJPC is especially well-positioned to provide long-term support for the work of the Michigan Task Force on Jails and Pretrial Detention once its tenure concludes in 2020. The current moment enables Michigan to be a leader in implementing evidence-based crime policy. Given the opportunity to continue its work, the CJPC is poised to play a key role in making that opportunity a reality.

Respectfully,

Amanda Burgess-Proctor, Ph.D.
Chair, Criminal Justice Policy Commission