

February 15, 2022

<<Salutation>> <<First Name>> <<Last Name>>

<<Street Address>>

<<City State Zip Code>>

Re: Faith Leaders Call for Legislators to Resist Punitive Policies

To the members of the Illinois Legislature,

It is our prayer that this letter finds you well. As faith leaders representing numerous denominations across the state, we write with concern about calls for the Illinois legislature to double down on the failed policies of punishment that brought us mass incarceration. Last year, you advanced righteous reforms with the passage of progressive criminal justice legislation. Despite regressive backlash from some law enforcement and legislators, you have done a great thing by championing justice reform and ought not counteract that progress with policies that expand incarceration.

As the state continues to implement provisions of recent reforms, we know that some voices are seeking to imperil the efficacy of this work and drag us back towards the punitive policies that have failed our communities for decades. On behalf of faith communities throughout Illinois, we urge you to resist calls for regressive, punitive legislation. Rather than taking us backward, we are calling on you to boldly take us further down the road to justice by continuing the work that was spurred and reignited by the nationwide protests in defense of Black lives.

The heart of criminal justice and pretrial reform speaks to the heart of our deeply held beliefs as people of faith: the belief that each person's life is sacred, and everyone should be treated justly and fairly in the systems we allow to govern us. Laws that punish people who are legally presumed innocent and awaiting trial, or that do not protect people from abuse by a legal system with a historical penchant for racial discrimination and inequity, violate those principles. Criminal justice reform honors the truth that no human being is beyond redemption or unworthy of restoration. By passing laws that focus less on punishment and more on preventing and repairing harm in our communities, you help lead us toward a safe, thriving, beloved community in Illinois.

As faith leaders, we commit to move in solidarity with you as you continue to fight for criminal justice reforms that are restorative, redemptive, and that challenge what is comfortable for many in order to advance what is fair for all.

May God bless you and keep you,

Signed:

Aryeh Bernstein, Avodah, National Jewish
 Educator
 Cantor David Goldstein, North Shore
 Congregation Israel
 Cantor Michelle Drucker, Friedman
 Emanuel Congregation
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 Baptist Church
 Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM, St. Bendice the
 Black Friary
 Fr. Carroll Mizicko, St. Augustine of Hippo
 Catholic Church
 Fr. Philip Maikkula, St. Makarios the Great
 Orthodox Mission
 Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, Justice For All
 Imam Bader Hafeez, Masjid Dawah
 Imam Tariq I. El-Amin, Masjid Al-Taqwa
 Jason Dewey, Pastor, The Sign of the Dove
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 Jia Johnson, Project Manager, McCormick
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 Kai Lawrence, Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran
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 Kevin J McLemore, Pastor, Epiphany United
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 Kristan Veenbaas, Co-Director of Older
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 Minister Attorney M. Michelle Day,
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Minister Kim Marie Grice, Illinois
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 Minister Robert Bushey, Central Christian
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 Misbahudeen Ahmed Rufai, Lamp of Faith
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 Omar A Karim, Executive Director,
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 Pastor Adam Dowd, Lord of Life Lutheran
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 Pastor Elle Dowd, South Loop Campus
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 Pastor Marissa Drake, Zion Temple,
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 Pastor Patrick Fish, St Marks Lutheran
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 Rabbi Brant Rosen, Tzedek Chicago
 Rabbi Daniel Kirzane, Oak Park Temple
 Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, Scholar in
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 Rabbi Dr. Rachel S. Mikva, Chicago
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 Rabbi Isaac Serotta, Makom Solel Lakeside
 Rabbi Jason Fenster, Congregation BJBE
 Rabbi Jessica Wainer, Congregation Etz
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 Rabbi Lisa Sari Bellows, Senior Rabbi
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 Rabbi Rachel Kaplan Marks, Temple Beth
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 Rabbi Rebecca L. Dubowe, Moses
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 Rabbi Shoshanah Conover, Temple
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 Rev. Alice Harper-Jones, Associate Pastor,
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 Rev. Alka Lyall, Broadway United Methodist
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Rev. Allen Harden, Beverly Unitarian Church
Rev. Amity Carrubba, Grace Episcopal Church
Rev. Angela Fleming, Illinois Great Rivers West Side Parish
Rev. Beth Freese Dammers, Community Presbyterian Church of Clarendon Hills
Rev. Beverly Wilkes-Null, Center for Faith and Spirituality
Rev. Catherine R Watkins, Chicago Metropolitan Assn, UCC
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Rev. Charles Burton, Unity Fellowship Alton
Rev. Charles Straight, Faith United Methodist Church
Rev. Colleen Vahey, Minister, Third Unitarian Church
Rev. Craig T. Robinson, Jr., St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church
Rev. Darice Wright, Life Church in Chicago Heights
Rev. Darrick Jackson, Affiliated Community Minister of Second Unitarian Church of Chicago
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Rev. Dee Evans, Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist
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Rev. Donald Cameron, First Unitarian Church of Chicago
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Rev. Dr. Beth Brown, Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church
Rev. Dr. Christina Berry, First Presbyterian Church
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Rev. Grant Swanson, Urban Village Church, Chicago
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Rev. Jacob Gawlik, St. John's Lutheran Church - Sterling
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Rev. Jason Coulter, Ravenswood UCC
Rev. Jason Lydon, Second Unitarian Church of Chicago
Rev. Jeffrey Phillips, United Church of Christ

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Rev. Jesse Knox III, Congregational Church
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Rev. John Bell Wesley, United Methodist
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Rev. John Dillon, Ridgefield-Crystal Lake
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Rev. Jon Gilbert Martinez, Christ Church
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Rev. Julian DeShazier, University Church
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