

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marion County has a long history of overly aggressive policing and prosecution strategies that have entangled far too many Black and Latino men and women in the criminal justice system, without making the community safer. County officials have long failed to follow best practices for preventing violence, diverting people out of the criminal justice system, and reducing the number of people behind bars.

- **Between 1985 and 2014 the per capita jail population in Marion County doubled, from 1.1 to 2.14 people incarcerated per 1,000 residents.**
- **The number of women incarcerated increased by 145% between 1985 and 2014.**
- **Extraordinarily high rates of incarceration are concentrated in a small number of zip codes with high Black and Latino populations**
- **Blacks in Marion County are 3.1 times more likely to be in jail than Whites.**
- **Unlike most other counties, Marion fails to transparently report basic data on the Annual Survey of Jails, including the number of inmates in county jails who have not been convicted of any crime, as well as the racial demographics of the jail population.**
- **Many people found innocent or whose charges are ultimately dismissed, are spending long periods of time in jail in Marion County. More than 44% of people who had their charges dismissed or were found innocent spent more than 30 days behind bars, with more than 5 percent spending more than 6 months. These figures are extraordinarily high.**

Marion County's elected officials are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all people in the county. But **historically they have pursued policies that cycle large number of Black and Latino men and women through the criminal justice system and effectively criminalize whole communities.** Mayor Hogsett's public recognition that the criminal justice system in Marion County is broken and his commitment to make major policy

changes in this area, represents an important opportunity to improve life in Indianapolis for all residents.

- **The small scale and limited nature of Marion County’s drug and mental health diversion efforts means that large numbers of people are being warehoused in jail rather than receiving the health and addiction services they need.**
- **Although an extraordinarily high number of people are spending long periods of time in jail in Marion County without ever being convicted of any crime, the county has not followed best practices – such as eliminating money bail, conducting pre-trial risk assessment and setting fees and fines based on ability to pay for everyone – that would prevent people from spending time in jail simply because they are poor.**
- **Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry has not adopted responsible prosecutor practices, such as reporting on racial disparities in charging, across-the-board post-arrest assessment for all people arrested, and minimizing the length of parole and probation.**
- **Marion County’s civilian review board does not have authority to handle criminal cases and there is no independent prosecution of police shootings.**
- **Marion County has highly-regarded re-entry programs, such as RecycleForce and Public Advocates in Community Re-Entry (PACE-OAR), but it needs to invest more resources in transitional jobs and housing to keep people from ending up back in jail.**
- **Homicides in Indianapolis reached an all-time high of 144 in 2015. Yet Marion County has failed to fully fund and implement Ceasefire, an evidence-based approach that has proven to reduce gun violence and homicides in urban areas.**

Mass incarceration may be a national issue, but solving it requires sustained local action in Marion County. The good news is that there are tested research-based policies that other counties across the nation have adopted that have succeeded in reducing the number of people of color in jail and under the supervision of the criminal justice system, while making communities safer and refocusing public resources on, jobs and job training, education, mental health and drug treatment and violence prevention.

This report shows that there is a better way forward for Marion County. Change is possible, but only if local officials commit to eliminate glaring racial disparities in policing and prosecution. **As the best practices in this report show, real reform goes beyond moving people from jail to community supervision.** It requires dramatically reducing the number of people of color involved in the criminal justice system in the first place.