



LATINO ACTION NETWORK

POLICY STATEMENT ON REFORMS TO NEW JERSEY'S CARCEREL STRUCTURE 2022

The past year has exposed a consistent culture of torture and medical/mental health neglect throughout county jails, juvenile detention centers and institutions under the jurisdiction of the NJ Department of Corrections. The following policy recommendations focus specifically on long overdue reform at the state's jails and prisons. The loud public outcry stresses the desperate need for immediate action and accountability. Some in custody atrocities exposed just within the last year are the assaults in Edna Mahan and fence crucifixions in Bayside prison. Some examples of nu-entry failure include, a man suffering from Parkinson's disease released after seventeen years of custody, abandoned by the NJDOC personnel at the Trenton train station in a wheelchair with nowhere to go.

While many reform laws have been signed, their implementation remains slow and inconsistent while atrocities continue.

More than 5,300 people were released since the emergency COVID legislation was signed into law in 2020. Recidivism for this cohort is 9%, far lower than the 30% rate reported by the State for the period immediately preceding the pandemic. Sixty four percent of those released were Black and 22% were white, approximately equivalent to the racial composition of the state's prison population which is 61% Black and 20% white. The State provided no data for Hispanics or Latinos in this data.

LAN Policy Recommendations:

- A thorough review and updating of recruitment, training and hiring practices for corrections employees that includes true diversity, a balance of life experience perspectives and academic degrees in hiring.
- A comprehensive review of the administrative code of conduct manual which governs all policies and procedures for NJDOC, <https://casetext.com/regulation/new-jersey-administrative-code/title-10a-corrections> which currently does not fully reflect all current laws. Require real-time updating of the manual to reflect the language of new laws including all guidelines on de-escalation and disciplinary protocols.
- Mandate all corrections officer candidate trainings and psych evaluations by the corrections police academy to include the JJC, county jails, NJDOC and parole officer recruits prior to hire.

The Latino Action Network was founded in 2009 to fight for political empowerment and defend civil rights





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- Upgrade identifiers in the NJDOC intake structure that include race & ethnicities to increase the accuracy of origin.
- Conduct an audit and propose recommendations based on the recent large-scale downsizing of carceral systems in New Jersey. Re-allocate saved funds back into the in-custody and nu-entry programs that increase humane, “successful” and viable carceral custody for individuals serving time and those newly returning to the community.
- Due to changes in intake, relevant to population downsizing, conduct a review with recommendations for revised intake, placement, and special needs policies. Driven by these findings, implement appropriate, timely remedial protocols for carceral systems statewide
- Drawing upon the experiences of the COVID pandemic, develop improved safeguards and procedures to address future disease outbreaks throughout statewide carceral systems.
- Review and update the existing Executive Order # 124 which stands alone for COVID safeguards and hygiene requirements for those is carceral spaces staff and prisoners.
- Remove the barriers currently cited as “security concerns” that prohibit surprise inspections or visits by oversight boards, legislators or ombudsman personnel to include but not be limited to the Department of Health, Ombudsman’s office (DOC or Elderly Care) OSHA, and other safety and health inspections
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- Conduct public hearings to afford testimony regarding the current health & mental health practices of Rutgers University Health Care
- Assure timely and appropriate consequences for violations of Use of Force protocols throughout the carceral systems in NJ.

