



Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform S.2170 and H.3935 (Joint Committee on the Judiciary)

Although Massachusetts has the lowest incarceration rate in the U.S., if we were a nation, we would have the eighth-highest rate in the world. Since the 1970s, our rate has increased four to five times, which indicates we can decrease the number of people in custody. There are many more individuals under correctional control through parole and probation. It is unsettling that there is a disproportionate effect of incarceration on minority communities in Massachusetts. These two bills would address most of the reforms the League is supporting this session to decrease incarceration:

Reducing Recidivism under H.3935 by two-thirds in part by allowing those serving mandatory minimums to get work release and parole, expanding programs, enabling pre-trial individuals to have access to programs and funding for these initiatives.

Decrease Incarceration by supporting **S.2170** for comprehensive reform:

- Expanding **Restorative Justice** programs in which police partner with communities to resolve problems on the ground rather than through the courts.
- **Reducing the Criminalization of Poverty** by eliminating or reducing fines and fees, increasing the felony larceny threshold to \$1500, eliminating other collateral consequences such as suspending driver's licenses or keeping CORI records.
- Taking **Primary Caretaker status** into account for the sake of the children when sentencing.
- Ending **Mandatory Minimums** for low-level drug crimes; not creating new mandatory minimums.
- Allowing for **Medical Parole** for the terminally ill or incapacitated.
- Restricting the use of **Solitary Confinement** and making sure there is oversight and a way to work one's way out. Collecting data so this can be monitored is also essential.
- Reducing waiting periods for **Sealing** records and allowing for **Expungement** for the falsely accused or juveniles, including sealing records for resisting arrest so people can get jobs and housing.
- **Parole Board Reform** is not included in the Senate version of the bill but could be added in the House version if our voices are heard.

Action Needed: H.3935, also called the Council of State Government bill, is in the House Ways and Means Committee. Representatives are urged to contact the Committee chair and leadership to bring this bill to reduce recidivism to a vote. Representatives are also urged to support a comprehensive omnibus bill with the above provisions, including the addition of Parole Board Reform, after the Senate votes on **S.2170**.

S.2170, also called the omnibus bill, is in the Senate Ways and Means Committee. Senators are urged to contact the Committee chair and leadership to bring this bill up for a vote. Senators are also urged to support **H.3935** to reduce recidivism by bringing this bill to the Senate floor for a vote.