

POLICY REPORT

Notes from the frontlines of making change

IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Our new approach and tactics are showing how immigration reform can be a local issue. First, we published a preview of a report detailing how Utah law enforcement agencies, including Salt Lake County's Jail, cooperate with ICE and use county resources to carry out federal immigration enforcement actions. Second, noting that ICE continues to detain, hold, and transfer Utahns between jails and facilities that have COVID-19 outbreaks is cruel and inhumane, we called on the ICE regional office and U.S. Attorney to stop the unnecessary detention and transfer of individuals suspected of violating immigration law. Third, we have amplified our advocacy to ensure language access during the pandemic. We urged the Bear River Health Department to translate public health announcements into Spanish and other commonly spoken languages as they addressed a deadly virus outbreak at a Cache County meatpacking plant.

SMART JUSTICE

Our next goal is to pass legislation that stops the revolving door at Utah jails and prisons driven by technical violations of parole and probation. This is a serious problem in Utah. In 2017, 3,035 people in Utah returned to prison for supervision violations, making up 79% of all new prison admissions. Of those, 52% were for technical violations. Our proposed legislation would end the practice of sending people back to jail or prison for minor, non-criminal, technical violations of probation and parole.

JAILS & PRISONS

After filing a Petition for Extraordinary Relief with the Utah Supreme Court in April to demand jails and prisons release incarcerated individuals vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic, we withdrew the lawsuit against the counties in May after many jails made substantial progress.

We continue to promote aggressive decarceration efforts, while monitoring periodic virus outbreaks in Utah's jails and prisons. We are also collecting facts and statements to use in potential litigation and engaging in public advocacy and education.