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2015 Newsletter Number 2

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## MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



*You are invited...*



### MAJR General Meeting

Wed. Sept. 9, 2015 @ 7:30pm  
Annapolis Friends Meeting

351 Dubois Road, Annapolis

The MAJR Coordinating Council meeting will report on its plans and request approval by the general membership present. Also, the three committees will report. There will be an update on the Md. Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council and the focus groups, with requests for volunteers for a couple of tasks.



### JRCC Advisory Stakeholders

Thurs. Sept. 10, 2015 @ 7pm?  
See the JRCC website for the time and location of this meeting

## MAJR Accomplishments

What happened to the MAJR initiatives that were pursued during the 2015 legislative session?

### Justice Reinvestment Funding

A major win: SB 602 establishing the Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council was passed.

### Maryland Second Chance Act of 2015

Another win for Maryland! Senate Bill 526 was passed and signed into law.

### Full and Fair Reimbursement for Local Detention

MAJR's approach will be presented to the Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council for study.

### Prisoners Employment and Rehabilitation

The **Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council** has two years to develop policies to reduce mass incarceration in Maryland. This is your opportunity to give voice to your concerns and help the Council reach for a positive program. Everyone is invited to give testimony.



#### Justice Reinvestment Council

Fri. Sept. 11, 2015 @2:30pm  
Legislative Services Building

90 State Cir, Annapolis, MD 21401

The PEW Foundation will report to the **Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council** giving a Maryland system assessment and an introduction to policy discussions. This is a public meeting and you are invited.

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## MAJR's New Charter

MAJR is making some changes! We have established a new Coordinating Council that will be charged with overseeing our committees, listening to input at general meetings, and articulating our legislative goals. Here is our newly forged statement of who we are:



*MAJR is a bipartisan, statewide alliance seeking legislative changes in Maryland's correctional policies to support alternatives to incarceration, address inequities, and aid citizens returning from prison to lead productive lives, thus strengthening families and communities.*

### Mission

- To advocate for legislative reforms

### Act

MAJR's approach will also be presented to the **Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council** for study.

### Evidence-based "Risk/Needs" Screening for Offenders

MAJR's approach will also be presented to the **Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council** for study.

### The Safer Communities Conciliation Act

Expungement—Restorative Justice Programs were withdrawn. MAJR expects the **Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council** to address this proposal.

### Ex-Offenders Earned Opportunities Act

This bill failed to receive committee support during the 2015 session.

### Parole Incentive for Life

The proposal to remove the participation of the Governor in parole for persons with a life sentence did not receive committee support this session. However, MAJR has received reports the Governor voluntarily will revise the past "life means life" policy.

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## MAJR Coordinating Council

- **Adrian Bishop**, Stony Run Friends: Meeting Coordinator
- **Diamonte Brown**, Out For Justice
- **Philip Caroom**, Former chair Maryland Judic. Conf. Ad Hoc Committee on Sentencing, Alternatives, Reentry & Best Practices; Former Judicial Liaison to Maryland Reentry Taskforce
- **Candy Clark**, Unitarian Universalist

of Maryland's criminal justice system that emphasize rehabilitation and restorative justice over mass incarceration and punishment.

- To create opportunities for those committed to criminal justice reform to meet, share resources, and engage with each other around common purposes.
- To raise awareness and understanding of mass incarceration among citizens of Maryland and promote positive alternatives.



## Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council

### What is the JRCC?


As a result of MAJR's efforts the Council was created through the passage of SB602 in the 2015 legislature. The Council will craft a framework of sentencing and corrections policies with the goal of safely reducing the number of inmates in Maryland prisons, controlling state spending on prisons, and reinvesting those savings into more effective strategies to increase public safety and at the same time help nonviolent offenders from returning to prison.

The JRCC has public meetings as well as stakeholder meetings where the public (that's us!) is invited to participate in the Justice Reinvestment process. You can participate by coming to these meetings with clear, factual presentations and recommendations for making Maryland's correctional system fairer and more

### Legislative Priorities

- **Christopher Ervin**, Vice Chairman, The Committee Of Concerned Citizens; President of The Lazarus Rite LLC
- **Vince Greco**, Maryland C.U.R.E.; Out for Justice; JCI Prison Scholars Program; Extra-Legalese Group, Inc.
- **Lea Green**, Director, Maryland C.U.R.E.
- **Jerry Mclaurin**, People for Change
- **Patience Schenck**, Educator; Member, Annapolis Friends Peace and Justice Center

### Who is on the JRCC?

- Christopher B. Shank, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention, Chairman 
- Senator Bobby Zirkin
- Senator Michael Hough
- Senator Nathaniel McFadden
- Senator Douglas Peters
- Delegate Kathleen Dumais
- Delegate Erek Barron
- Delegate Michael Malone
- Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith
- Judy Sachwald, Director of Parole and Probation
- Sam J. Abed, Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Services
- David Eppler, Attorney General's Office
- Paul DeWolfe, Office of the Public Defender
- Judge Diane O. Leasure, Howard County Circuit Court (Ret)
- Robert L. Green, Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation
- Sheriff Troy D. Berry, Charles County

effective.

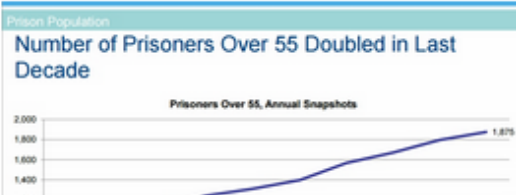


Judge Murphy, JRCC Member, greets Vince Greco of MAJR

### What have we learned?

The researchers working for the PEW Charitable Trusts have investigated data from the Department of Corrections. From their **July** presentation to the JRCC we learned:

- Overall, prison admissions are down 19% in Maryland over the last decade. During the same time, Maryland's violent crime rate went down 32%, and the property crime rate went down 27%.
- In FY 2014, most admissions (58%) were for nonviolent crimes.
- In FY 2014, 58% of admissions were people previously on supervision.
- Despite a 52% decline in this category, possession with intent to distribute narcotics was still the top offense in FY 2014.
- 36% of Maryland's prison admissions were from Baltimore City.
- **The number of prisoners over 55 years doubled in the last decade.**



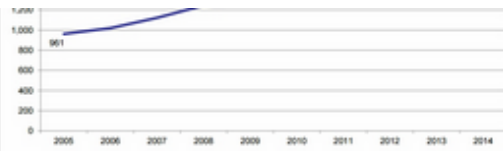
- Scott Shellenberger, State's Attorney, Baltimore County
- Judge Joseph Murphy, Maryland Court of Appeals (Ret)
- Caryn Aslan, Job Opportunities Task Force
- Tim Maloney, Attorney
- LaMonte E. Cooke, Queen Anne's County Detention Center

## It's Time for *Community Safety Reform*

For far too many decades, through way too many political cycles, national and local policy makers have visited and revisited the issue of Criminal Justice Reform. Reform has usually been focused on new and tougher laws and more prosecutions, leading to a massive increase in incarceration. These and other reforms have failed in their primary mission: community safety.

Community safety reform and reducing the victimization of innocent people must be the drivers, not economics or political policy, be it conservative or liberal. With an ineffective system such as Maryland's, which has had between a 40% and 52% failure rate (recidivism) over the past several decades, we must look directly at the immediate and grave danger in which it puts our communities. This and this alone must be the primary objective for all decisions made by the new administration and future reforms.

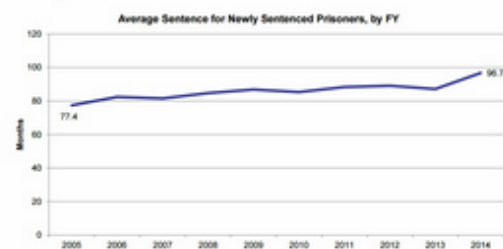
The "tough on crime" mandates for the past two decades have not lowered the victimization rate (which we conveniently call the crime rate). The pain, long-lasting anguish, and anger of victims, their loved ones, and the entire community must be addressed. Additionally, reform must reduce the number of *future* victims by implementing changes in how the 95% of all prisoners who are eventually released.



### Trends in Sentencing

- Over the decade, the average sentence length for newly sentenced prisoners in Maryland increased by 25%.
- There was a 29% increase in the average sentence length for people on probation whose probation was revoked.
- Court Circuits varied significantly in average sentence length in FY 2014 – from 52.8 to 85.4 months.

#### Prison Admissions 25% Increase in Average Sentence Length for Newly Sentenced Prisoners



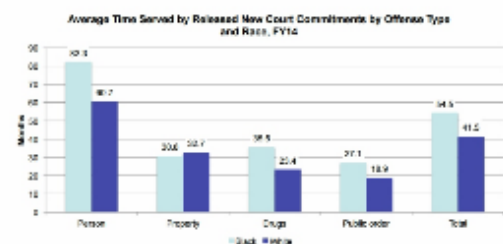
See all the PowerPoint slides for this presentation.

See MAJR's fact sheet summarizing this presentation.

In the August meeting, PEW researchers focused on parole and probation. Among their key findings are the following:

- Black offenders serve longer in prison than white offenders for similar crimes.

#### Follow-Up Questions Black Offenders Serve Longer in Prison than White Offenders



are released.

Between 12,000 and 14,000 inmates are released each year in Maryland. If we merely reduce the recidivism rate in half by implementing effective policies, then we have saved a minimum of 3,000 citizens from being victimized and spared the countless loved ones and communities who are also pained with each and every victim.

For those who over the years have thought about the economic waste of the failed prison system as well as those who fear that certain reforms that run counter to “get tough on crime” policies are driven by liberal ideology, I ask you to re-evaluate with your focus. We can be “smart on crime” instead of just “tough” and support the kind of effective changes that will reduce community victimization.

MAJR and its allies are focused on implementing effective change that will increase community safety by increasing the success rate of the returning citizens. These changes will equate to thousands upon thousands of people being saved from becoming victims, becoming the loved one of a victim, or becoming family members of someone who is incarcerated. Let's start talking about new buzzwords: not just criminal justice reform, but Community Safety Reform and Reduction of Victimization. Let's keep these concepts in the forefront of our thoughts and feelings as we evaluate each and every suggested reform.

Vince Greco

#### DPP Time Served Low Risk Offenders Serve Almost as Long on Probation as High Risk Offenders

Average Time Served on Probation by Supervision Level, Before Satisfactory

- Blacks are over-represented in the probation and post-release supervision population.
- 71% of the probation population is moderate or low-risk.
- **Low risk probationers serve the same amount of time on supervision as high risk probationers.**



**Stay in touch with MAJR! We will need your help for the 2016 legislative session in Annapolis!**

Visit: <http://www.ma4jr.org>

See all the PowerPoint slides for this presentation.



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