



# CJPC

## MAY 2021 NEWSLETTER

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**LESLIE CREDLE**

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE 4 HOUSING



**JAMIE ELDRIDGE**

STATE SENATOR



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**LESLIE CREDLE, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE 4 HOUSING**



*"My passion for liberation work for justice involved individuals is fueled by the suffering I experienced and witnessed while incarcerated. The abrupt separation of women from their children by incarceration is physically and mentally traumatizing. I witnessed numerous mothers lose their children to another system of power, the Department of Family Services (DFS). DFS has the sole authority to permanently adopt out children, and overwhelmingly children of color are adopted, while their mothers are in prison and unable to fight back. If family emergencies, or worse, tragedy, occur while incarcerated, it is impossible to be involved in any meaningful way, adding further trauma".*

Before my incarceration, my daughter was attending college and working toward her bright future. During my sentence, she was killed by gun violence, and I was stuck behind bars without any support or ability to be with my family.

I have turned my pain into purpose. This is one of the reasons why this work is so important to me and why I am the right person to lead this organization. As soon as I was released, I began advocating for alternatives to incarceration.

I was fortunate to connect with Families for Justice as Healing, through their mentorship, I took the lead, as one of a few directly affected women, to successfully train the Public Defenders in all Counties throughout the State of MA, for the usage of the Primary Caretaker Bill motion. The legislation provides community-based sentencing alternatives for primary caretakers of dependent children. Now I am shifting focus to address another critical need in our community, the housing crisis justice-involved individuals are currently experiencing.


Failure is not an option. There are no other organizations or entities in the state like [Justice4Housing](#). When I told people my vision - to challenge Public Housing Authorities, change their discriminatory housing policies, and create permanent housing opportunities for those with criminal records - I was told that this was an impossible goal. As we have built this organization, that perception has shifted.

Despite continued barriers and setbacks, I have worked to make my vision reality. I founded Justice 4 housing on my own and built up a team of dedicated organizers who assist in strengthening the organization and meeting our goals. We all share the same drive and are able to support each other through challenge and congratulate each other on our successes.

Our organization has a collaborative leadership model, with input from our partner organizations, our team, [The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly incarcerated Women and Girls](#), Families For Justice As Healing, [New Beginnings Reentry Services](#), All Things Art, We Are Better Together, Black & Pink, MA and - most importantly - our directly impacted neighbors. I value the demands of my community, and they guide us every step of the way.

As our organization has grown, we have developed relationships with several legislators who support our work. Such as Senator Chang-Diaz and Representative Liz Miranda who sponsor the Bills we filed this legislative session [S.866](#) and [H.1799 "An Act Relative to Homes For All"](#), which is a ban the box model. Preventing landlords and real estate brokers from running background checks. As well as Representative Niki Elugardo, who sponsored our bill [HD4041](#), "An Act securing housing opportunities for tenants with criminal justice history. Senator Eldridge, I serve on his Advisory Board for [S1578](#) "Criminal Justice Protections to all Prisoners in Segregated Confinement. Lastly, by representing [Families For Justice As Healing](#), I am one of leaders from the "[Peoples Not Prisons Coalition](#)" to ensure passage of bill [H.1900](#) "An Act relative to telephone service for inmates in all correctional and other penal institutions in the Commonwealth".

**We were pleasantly surprised to get the support from unusual cynics, who have now historically shifted away from thinking "incarceration first." Now are allies who aid us in challenging the carceral system and its ripple effects. We are persistent and passionate and have already successfully shifted minds in powerful places.**



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OUR MISSION: DECRIMINALIZE HOUSING

## Defending Oneself Against Systems of Power Workshops

For formerly incarcerated women or justice-involved women experiencing homelessness.

**Every Tuesday  
June 8-29, 2021**

**Registration Link:  
[bit.ly/3uXbqYu](https://bit.ly/3uXbqYu)**

\$250 stipended and incentives to women.

### **Week 1: HAND ON DEFENSE Model**

- Advocating for yourself
- How to use your legislators
- Existing community resources

### **Week 2: Healing from the Impact Trauma**

- Domestic violence,
- Racism housing discrimination
- Community outreach awareness

### **Week 3: How to Prevent a Justice-Involved Eviction**

- HUD & PHA policies
- Housing and recidivism
- Eviction prevention

### **Week 4: Relieving Your Body & Brain from Stress 1 hour**

- Healing from historical trauma
- Leadership development, telling your story
- Capacity building
- Survey

4-week workshops will include facilitated healing activities, and the opportunity to learn self-advocacy, community outreach awareness, how to prevent a justice-involved eviction, domestic violence prevention, defending oneself against systems of power, healing from the stress of homelessness.

This intentional dialogue will provide opportunities for the targeted population to connect with other directly affected women head of households experiencing barriers to housing, many of whom are single mother heads of household.

Cultivating each justice-involved or formerly incarcerated woman with community resource organizing skills, tools, and techniques needed to address housing discrimination and enabling women and children to gain independence and a higher quality of life.



STATE SENATOR **JAMIE ELDRIDGE**



*“As the Senate chair of the Criminal Justice Reform caucus, I am dedicated to advocating for legislation that will enhance our current justice system, treat our incarcerated persons with dignity and educate the public about the root causes and symptoms of mass incarceration. This issue is timely given the inequities present in our prison system that continue to be highlighted especially during COVID-19,”* said State Senator Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton).

This legislative session, I am filing three pieces of legislation towards comprehensive policy reform around harm reduction and creating a fair and equitable justice system.

#### CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

##### **An Act to Prevent the Imposition of Mandatory Minimum Sentences based on Juvenile Adjudications (S.D.138)**

This bill prevents courts from lengthening certain mandatory-minimum sentences based on a person's actions as a child (i.e. juvenile court adjudications). Utilizing juvenile adjudications to increase prison sentences is immoral. Scientific evidence demonstrates that, due to developmental differences between children and adults, the two should be treated separately within the justice system. A person should not be subject to additional mandatory punishment based on things they did when they were children, as young as age 7.

##### **An Act to Provide Criminal Justice Reform Protections to All Prisoners in Segregated Confinement (S.D. 415)**

This bill fills a loophole in the Criminal Justice Reform Act of 2018 which allowed for fewer protections of prisoners in solitary confinement than the legislature intended by creating an airtight umbrella term of “segregated confinement” to afford protections to all prisoners who are, for all intents and purposes, in solitary confinement. This bill also bans postpartum moms and people with developmental and physical disabilities from being placed in solitary confinement.

##### **An Act to ensure the constitutional rights and human dignity of prisoners on mental health watch (S.D.2386)**

Recently, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) released the results of an investigation into the MA Department of Corrections's (DOC) use of mental health watch. The report found constitutional violations and egregious failures to ensure the safety of prisoners. This bill offers remedies to help ensure appropriate behavioral health treatment and the prevention of self-harm and suicide for prisoners on mental health watch. Among other provisions, if a prisoner has been on mental health watch for 24 hours and continues to require observation as determined by a qualified mental health professional, the bill requires that the prisoner be transferred to an inpatient psychiatric facility or unit.



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On May 17 The Building Up People Not Prisons coalition, led by Families for Justice as Healing and The National Council of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, published an [open letter to the Massachusetts state legislature](#) in support of a moratorium on prison and jail construction. Over 90 organizations, including CJPC, signed in support of An Act Establishing a Jail and Prison Construction Moratorium, filed in the House as [H.1905](#) by Rep. Chynah Tyler and in the Senate as [S.2030](#) by Sen. Jo Comerford. This bill pauses new construction and renovation of prisons and jails except to protect the safety of incarcerated people through routine maintenance or repairs. As the letter reads, This prison would incarcerate our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. We know the conditions inside Massachusetts jails and prisons are toxic and inhumane because our loved ones live in them. Yet we also know that we need to shift our state's focus to decarceration and real alternatives to incarceration.

Although the MA Department of Correction is seeking to build a new women's prison which could cost in excess of \$50m, Building Up People Not Prisons notes that we can interrupt the cycles of harm by investing these funds in what communities need. By following the leadership of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women we can stop relying on incarceration and start investing in what different looks like for Massachusetts.

To support the moratorium and other policy priorities of the Building Up People Not Prisons coalition, you can visit [tinyurl.com/MAWeekofAction](https://tinyurl.com/MAWeekofAction).



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### The Democracy Behind Bars Coalition

Massachusetts has a long history of advocacy by directly-impacted people working to bolster the political power of incarcerated people and communities. The Democracy Behind Bars Coalition (DBBC) - an inside/outside statewide coalition of advocacy, service, and movement organizations and activists - is building on that legacy. Prison gerrymandering, felony disenfranchisement, and jail-based disenfranchisement all work together to strip hyper-incarcerated communities of their political voice, and the Democracy Behind Bars Coalition is working to dismantle these systems.

In Massachusetts, the right to vote for those serving felony convictions was taken away only 20 years ago. For all of Massachusetts' history, those incarcerated on misdemeanors or incarcerated pre-trial have maintained their right to vote, but the Commonwealth has failed to build a meaningful system to ensure these eligible voters can exercise that right -- leaving most incarcerated eligible voters facing what's known as de-facto disenfranchisement, jail-based disenfranchisement, or jail-based voter suppression. On top of felony disenfranchisement and jail-based disenfranchisement, prison gerrymandering -- the counting of incarcerated people in the Census in the prison where they are

incarcerated, rather than their home communities -- further shifts political power from those hyper-incarcerated communities to the generally white, suburban, and affluent communities where prisons are located.

As African American Coalition Committee Vice Chair and DBBC Leader Al-Ameen Patterson writes, these systems create "the loophole that undermines the 13th and 14th Amendments which ceased access to free Black labor and guaranteed Black folks equal protection of the laws respectively, unless they commit a "crime"

In 2021, the Democracy Behind Bars Coalition is working to end the unconstitutional voter suppression faced by eligible incarcerated voters by passing the Jail-Based Voting Bill, or An Act to protect the voting rights of eligible incarcerated people filed by Representatives Chynah Tyler and Liz Miranda (H. 836) and Senator Adam Hinds (S. 474). The Jail-Based Voting bill -- legislation the coalition sees as long overdue -- will do the following:

- **Require Sheriffs and elections officials** to ensure that eligible incarcerated voters have access to all materials needed to vote, including mail ballot applications, information on candidates, information to ensure ballot applications are not rejected, and private and secure means of returning their ballot including by secure dropbox;
- **Require the Secretary of Commonwealth** to issue guidance to elections officials on processing ballots from incarcerated voters, and collect data on participation;
- **Make jails and Houses of Corrections Automatic Voter Registration Agencies**, and require all incarcerated people be told of their voting rights upon being incarcerated and upon release;
- **Create at least one municipal polling location in jails and Houses of Corrections** in Counties with 800,000 people or more (currently Suffolk County, Worcester County, and Middlesex County) on the last day of early voting.

In the wake of attacks on our democracy, blatant attempts to suppress the votes of Black and POC communities, and another year in which we have been reminded again and again of the impunity with which police are able to take Black lives, the need to build a democracy that is more racially equitable and truly accountable to all of our communities could not be more clear. The coalition needs your support passing this legislation and ensuring that democracy doesn't stop at the walls of prisons or jails.

How to Help:

Join the Coalition E-List for alerts on phone banks, events, and other actions:

[www.safeelectionsma.org/joindembehindbars](http://www.safeelectionsma.org/joindembehindbars)

Write Your Legislator in Support of H. 836 and S. 474: <https://bit.ly/jbvaction>



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*An Act to Protect the Voting Rights of Eligible Incarcerated People*

## JAIL-BASED VOTING RIGHTS

Representative Chynah Tyler and Representative Liz Miranda, HD. 3253  
& Senator Adam Hinds, SD.2458

All citizens who have the right to vote must be able to exercise it. Yet every election, an estimated 750,000 eligible voters nationwide are denied meaningful access to the ballot when they are detained pre-trial, on misdemeanor convictions, or civilly committed. Massachusetts is no exception. This system of jail-based disenfranchisement disproportionately strips political power from Black communities and communities of color that are over-policed or and over-incarcerated.

Massachusetts must ensure that those disproportionately Black and POC Bay Staters who maintain the right to vote behind the wall have a meaningful opportunity to exercise it. HD 3253 and SD 2458 will do exactly that.

### The Problem

- ✓ In Massachusetts, citizens who are incarcerated on non-felony convictions or held on pre-trial convictions retain their constitutional right to vote. Without a system in place to provide these citizens access to ballot applications, voting materials, and deadlines, and to overcome additional hurdles, their constitutional right to vote is rendered meaningless.
- ✓ This system of "de-facto" disenfranchisement strips political power from as many as 8,000 to 10,000 eligible incarcerated citizens in Massachusetts.
- ✓ Massachusetts incarcerates Black citizens at eight times the rate as white citizens, even though Black Bay Staters make up less than 20% of our population. Jail-based disenfranchisement is a racial justice issue.

### The Solution

**An Act to Protect the Voting Rights of Eligible Incarcerated People** would create a system long overdue to provide citizens behind the wall with meaningful access to the ballot. It would:

- Require sheriffs to provide all eligible voters ballot applications, voting materials, and a private place to vote
- It would require sheriffs to facilitate voting, including timely return of applications and ballots
- Ensure sheriffs partner with community leaders and organizations to support participation
- Ensure municipal, in-person polling locations are available in jails in the most populous counties
- Ensure eligible incarcerated voters' ballot applications are not rejected by elections officials
- Improve registration and participation for returning citizens
- Provide data and reporting so that incarcerated people, advocates, organizers, and Bay Staters with loved ones behind the wall can assess the scale of the problem and the efficacy of the solution.

#### *Additional Voting & Incarceration Legislation*

- ✓ Senator Creem, SD 726: An act improving voting rights education for formerly incarcerated persons
- ✓ Representative Decker, HD 3784: An act combating misinformation about ex-offender voting rights
- ✓ Senator Chang-Diaz, SD 1330: An act to increase voter registration, participation, and to help prevent recidivism
- ✓ Senator Hinds, SD. 2049: An act relative to voting rights
- ✓ Representative Domb & Rep Tyler, HD 3701: An act relative to voting rights
- ✓ Representative Holmes, HD.2728: An Act increasing voter registration and participation to help prevent recidivism
- ✓ Representative Elugardo, HD.3483: An Act to pilot ballot box initiatives in carceral settings



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## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

- Life Without Parole
- Decarceration
- Medical Parole
- Clemency
- No-Cost Calls
- No New Women's Prison
- Prison and Jail Construction
- Visitation
- Material Justice as a Racial Justice Issue
- Jail Voting Rights

## BILLS TO FOLLOW:



- To decarcerate in light of COVID-19 (HD 3265)
- To end Life Without Parole Sentencing (HD 3275)
- To ensure greater transparency through media access to prisons and jails (SD 2201/HD 3595)
- To improve the medical parole/compassionate release process (SD 2163/HD 3975)
- To reform mental health watch (SD 2386/HD 3974)
- To keep the promise of the CJRA and reduce the use of solitary confinement (SD 415/HD 3269)
- To ensure no cost calls (SD 800/HD 2830)
- To reform the parole system (SD 1065/HD 2124)
- To establish a prison and jail construction moratorium (SD 1774/HD 3824)
- To end the incarceration of people for treatment of substance use disorders (SD 1055/HD 672)
- To establish a commission regarding treatment for substance use disorder during incarceration (SD 1663/HD 3477)
- To establish baseline standards and transparency for use of force in correctional settings (HD 3041/SD 2417)
- To ensure visitation is not unreasonably restricted (HD 1913/SD 1903)
- To protect the voting rights of eligible incarcerated people (HD 3253/SD 2458)
- To ensure incarcerated LGBTQI+ people have the right to safer housing, health, and affirming programming (SD 2032/HD 3664)
- LWOP abolition bill, (HD 1797)
- An Act relative to treatment, not imprisonment. Rep. Ruth Balsler, H. 1462
- An Act regarding consistent care for addiction rooted in evidence, Rep. Ruth Balsler, H. 2067
- An Act to improve public safety by facilitating access to addiction services, Rep. Ruth Balsler, H. 1460
- An Act transferring Bridgewater State Hospital from the Department of Corrections to the Department of Mental Health, Rep. Ruth Balsler, H. 2063
- An Act relative to ensuring quality mental health services in state correctional facilities, Rep. Ruth Balsler, H. 1461
- An Act to improve mental health services in places of incarceration, Reps Ruth Balsler and Marjorie Decker, H. 2085
- An Act to Further Family-Centered Child Support, Sen. Creem, Rep. Barber, S. 32, H. 183
- An Act to Prevent the Imposition of Mandatory Minimum Sentences Based on Juvenile Convictions, Sen. Jamie Eldridge, Rep. Liz Miranda, H. 1794, S. 1022
- An Act relative to homes for all, Sen. Chang Diaz, Rep. Miranda. S. 866, H. 1799
- An Act securing housing options for eligible tenants with a history of criminal justice involvement, HD 4041, Rep. Elugardo.
- An Act relative to enforcing federal law, Rep. Cabral H. 1477
- An Act to Reform Parole Supervision in the Interest of Justice, Sen Jehlen, Rep. Miranda, S. 1600, H. 1798

**Special thanks to Prisoners' Legal Services for contributing their Legislative Priorities to our newsletter moving forward!**

<https://plsma.org/current-issues/legislation/>



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## REENTRY RESOURCE GUIDE FROM BEGINNING REENTRY SERVICES, INC

**Beginning Reentry Services, Inc**

<https://www.newbeginningsreentryservices.org>

**First Reentry Resource Guide Booklet**

<https://www.flipbookpdf.net/web/site/475cf17b4f6c276763e2a39dd278735ed4714452FBP21686880.pdf.html>

## FOLLOW THESE ORGANIZATIONS AND DYNAMIC HUMANS WHO WERE PART OF THIS EDITION AND CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR THE COMMUNITY!

**Senator Jamie Eldridge**

<https://www.senatoreldridge.com>

<https://malegislature.gov/Legislators/Profile/JBE0>

**Justice 4 Housing**

<https://www.justice4housing.org>

**Building Up People Not Prisons**

<https://justiceashealing.org/building-up-people-not-prisons/>

**Prisoners Legal Services**

<https://plsma.org>

**Democracy Behind Bars Coalition**

<https://www.safeelectionsma.org/behindbars>



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