



Families for Justice as Healing is led by incarcerated women, formerly incarcerated women, and women with incarcerated loved ones. Our members live in the most incarcerated communities in the Commonwealth. Our Black and Brown families have been forced to endure generations of racist policing and decades of disinvestment. To address generational trauma, economic devastation, and structural racism we need a radical shift in power and resources in Massachusetts. What we don't need is yet another watered-down omnibus bill rife with compromises and exceptions and a legislative process that silences and excludes most-impacted people.

S. 2820 does not do nearly enough to protect Black people from state violence nor stop the flow of Black people into jails and prison. The bill does not do nearly enough to shrink the role or the impact of policing in our communities. The bill is just another round of reforms that have already failed us. S.2820 will do more harm than good by increasing spending on law enforcement through training and training commissions, expanding the power of law enforcement agencies to oversee law enforcement, and making no changes to the fundamental function and operation of policing in the Commonwealth. The definition of law enforcement must include corrections officers who also enact racist violence on our community members.

The reforms and oversight mechanisms in this bill exist in dozens of other places but have not prevented the violence of policing.

Families for Justice as Healing is named in Section 63 which reads: *"There shall be a commission to review and make recommendations on: (i) improving, modernizing and developing comprehensive protocols for the training of state and county correction officers and juvenile detention officers."* **Please remove our name from this section of the legislation.**

While we have a public platform of demands related to policing, prison, and investment in communities, we did not have the opportunity to lead on any of those issues. Instead, we were included in a section on training guards with no discussion or consent with anyone from FJAH. We are an abolitionist organization led by people who have lived on prison bunks. We know we cannot "train out" the racism, physical violence, and sexual violence that are cornerstones of incarceration. We do believe it is important to establish a process so all law enforcement officials including correction officers can be fired, have their licenses revoked, and never be able to work in the field again. Yet, we don't think that will be achieved by a Commission issuing a report to the legislature next year. It will certainly have to involve contract renegotiation with officer unions.

We also do not believe Commissions are positioned to fundamentally change anything about policing or prisons in Massachusetts. We were appointed to the Justice Involved Women Panel established by the 2018 Criminal Justice Reform Act. As part of that panel, which is chaired by the Department of Correction, we could not even build consensus among members that we do not need another women's prison in Massachusetts despite having the lowest rate of incarceration of women in the country. We have not met a single time during COVID19 and there was no action by the Panel to do anything about



the humanitarian crisis at MCI-Framingham where almost half of the women were infected by COVID19.

The solution is to shift power and resources away from law enforcement and incarceration and into Black and Brown communities through a community-controlled process led by most-impacted people. We have been pushing to end pretextual stops and stop and frisks without exception ([tinyurl.com/stopbpd](https://tinyurl.com/stopbpd)). The legislature should decriminalize driving offenses which are a major gateway into the criminal legal system for Black and Brown people and poor and working class people. Rather than limiting legislation to moderate reforms and data collection, the legislature should shut down fusion centers, erase gang databases, and permanently ban facial surveillance by all state agencies including the RMV. I also support student-led efforts to remove police from schools

We have been advocating to set up a real, meaningfully funded participatory budgeting process with money taken out of the Department of Correction and Sheriffs budgets – budgets that continue to inflate every year at the expense of our people. The only part of S2820 that even approaches that goal is Section 2JJJJ – but the cap must be lifted, a floor of an annual investment must be set, the board must be majority impacted people, and most-impacted people must direct the priorities of the fund which cannot be limited to jobs.

Residents of the most incarcerated communities must get to set just and equitable investment priorities and distribute those resources to sustain and nourish what we really need to be safe: housing, healing, healthy food, culturally relevant treatment, mental healthcare, education, employment, co-operative businesses ownership, community-led violence prevention, art, culture, community centers, community-led organizations and programs. Our people are ready to lead that process. We have the vision and the solutions. Communities need the resources. In the same way that the DOC and Sheriffs budgets have constantly expanded, the community is now demanding significant investment that must increase every year. This is how we will address the root causes of incarceration and achieve our goal of ending incarceration of women and girls in Massachusetts.

This is the moment to address structural racism, income and wealth inequality, and the economic devastation that generations of disproportionate policing and incarceration have caused in Black communities. We cannot afford to waste this opportunity with rushed legislative action that does not reflect the will of most-impacted people.

Families for Justice as Healing has a vision for Massachusetts where all people have what they need to live safe and healthy lives. We have a vision of our communities without police, courts, and prisons. We demand no new jails and no new prisons in Massachusetts – including regional lockups. We have been imagining, designing, and planning what thriving communities look like. We have the solutions; we know the way forward: fund Black and Brown communities and defund the systems of harm and punishment which have failed to bring us safety and wellbeing. S2820 does not help us get there.