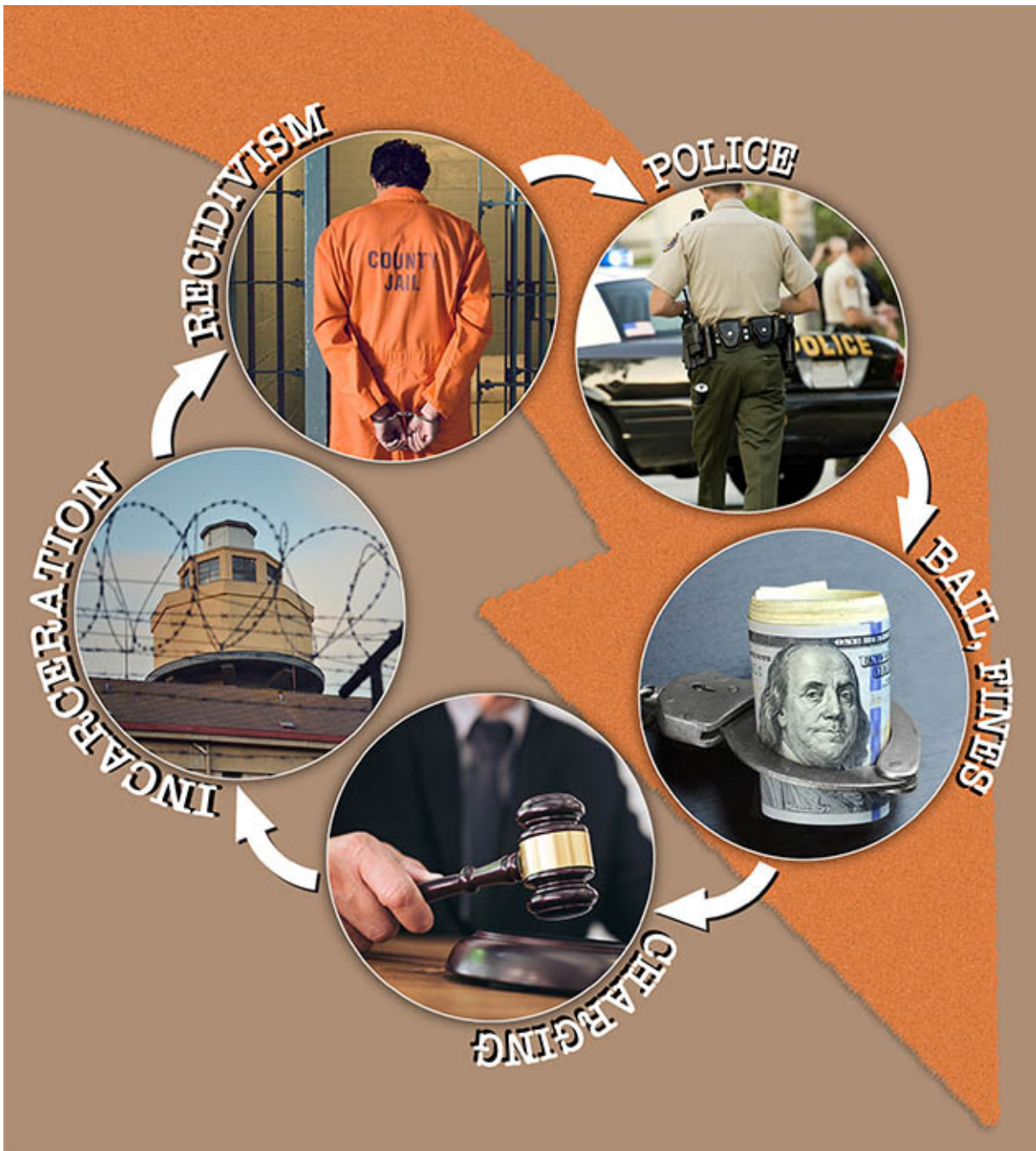


“Criminal Justice in Arizona”

Tucson Community Town Hall Report

Tucson, AZ – September 28, 2018



CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN ARIZONA

**Tucson Community Town Hall Report
September 28, 2018 – YWCA Conference Center**

Participants of the September 2018 Tucson Community Town Hall make the following findings and recommendations. This report reflects the consensus achieved through group discussions by Community Town Hall participants.

GOALS FOR ARIZONA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Goals for Arizona's criminal justice system must include promoting community safety, rehabilitation, reducing recidivism, providing accountability and consequences, and preventing people from entering the system in the first place. These goals are interwoven and interconnected, and the criminal justice system must serve all of them. Prisons may not be the most cost-effective solution for these goals.

The system should fund and provide effective treatment for persons who need mental health care or substance abuse treatment. Achieving improved quality and access to treatment will require improved funding; it will also require replicating successful models that already exist. We must recognize that prisons may not be the most effective place to provide long-term support for mental health or substance abuse issues. These are social issues, not simply criminal justice issues, and should be addressed accordingly.

The system should provide life skills, career training, and other resources that help incarcerated persons reenter society and help persons on probation transition to a successful future. Reducing recidivism requires a concerted effort to create job opportunities for people when they leave the system. It also requires advocating for services for families of persons in the criminal justice system, who become the support network for people when they leave the system. Prevention is linked to early intervention—including through childhood education—that can help reduce the number of people who enter the criminal justice system.

Accomplishing these goals touches upon programs and systems outside the purview of the criminal justice system, including our education system, our job training system and employment laws.

PRIOR TO INCARCERATION

Substance abuse correlates strongly to contact with the criminal justice system. We should seek to reduce the impact of substance abuse in our communities. This requires a comprehensive approach, which should reach into schools and neighborhood groups.

Education, including vocational and career training, can help instill passions and goals in our citizens to keep them away from crime. Schools also can serve as a first line of prevention and early intervention. Schools can benefit from improved access to mental health professionals to help with prevention. We must recognize that prevention can be less expensive and more cost-effective than punishment. Redoubling our emphasis on mentoring programs in schools can also pay dividends. Arizona ranks near the bottom nationally in spending on counselors in its schools. This must change.

We should help our law enforcement agencies by providing better training and rethinking who needs to be in jail and prison. Law enforcement are at the front lines of recognizing opportunities for intervention and treatment, along with teachers, mental health professionals and emergency room doctors. Training should focus on de-escalating conflict, decriminalizing poverty and helping identify treatment and services for at-risk populations. At the same time, we ask a lot of law enforcement, and need a more collaborative approach with other service providers to reduce the burden on them.

Regarding prosecution and courts, more funding is needed for probation officers and for alternatives to incarceration, such as Pima County's Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison program (DTAP), which provides a last chance at intensive treatment and services for persons who do not qualify for other treatment alternatives and would otherwise be headed to prison.

We need to understand the needs of the population in the system and look for ways to help them to make the system more efficient—a system of text-message reminders about pending court dates is an example. Arizona should adopt a system for merit-based selection for judges in all counties, instead of electing its judges

We also need to seek more efficient uses for scarce tax dollars. For instance, it costs about \$100 a day to jail a person in Pima County, but it would only be \$8 to \$15 per day for electronic monitoring. Reform of bond and bail laws should also be addressed to prevent unintended consequences. Arizona should evaluate the system of criminal fees and fines and the way that these can impose severe economic consequences for people who cannot afford them.

We should look to other states for best practices and innovative approaches that can be adopted here. We should also promote best practices locally and spread those to the rest of the state. As an example, Pima County has a criminal justice reform unit dedicated to reducing jail populations and improving opportunities for re-entry.

AFTER INCARCERATION

Arizona's criminal justice system could be improved by having reentry programs begin with the first day of incarceration. We also should explore how to better support families who have people incarcerated.

When in prison, we need to foster more ties with the outside. We need to look at how wages are paid to inmates in prison and consider whether they should be paid real wages for prison labor that could then be paid into the victim restitution fund or otherwise used to help with effective reintegration after release. We should also consider reintroducing the policy of giving time off of sentences for working or good behavior

We should support workforce development and life skills programs in prison that continue after release. We should also support programs that give inmates a source of pride and hope for their future.

With respect to private prisons, we need to analyze the impact of private prisons and whether they are meeting our goals of rehabilitation. We should consider having a requirement that private prisons provide resources and services based on industry best practices.

After release, we need to continue assistance—perhaps with "Community Integration Officers" who can help released inmates to transition with wrap-around services that allow them to better integrate into society.

We need to foster relationships with families and, if possible, reunify those released with their families. If this is not possible, we need to provide community based housing and other support. We need to look at what we can do as a community to reduce recidivism. We can all play a role. This may include providing transportation, housing or job training. It may also be as simple and powerful as being available to provide an ear for a recovering addict who needs someone to talk to when experiencing difficult times.

We need to have cultural changes that truly allows released prisoners to reintegrate back into society with the support of various community members and organizations. This includes providing incentives and support for them to reenter society. We should consider when it is important to require a criminal history and when it is not on applications for jobs and housing. "Ban the box efforts" should be supported for initial applications. We should consider restoring rights such as voting and expunging criminal records when appropriate.

THE TUCSON COMMUNITY

Pima County's geography contains different and distinct populations, each with a unique dynamic. These include a metropolitan area, a large rural area, and several Native American tribal communities. Compared with the rest of the state, Tucson and Pima County face special challenges posed by a high poverty rate, and by their proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border—specifically the proximity to corridors for drug smuggling and human trafficking.

As in other parts of Arizona, Tucson and Pima County suffer from a lack of funding for local law enforcement, and our populations have been hit hard by the effects of substance abuse and the rising tide of the opioid epidemic.

Solutions include local initiatives to move cases through the system more efficiently, and to explore lower-cost alternatives to having people remain in jail, such as electronic monitoring.

Solutions extend beyond the realm of law enforcement. We should invest more in education. We should also engineer streets, parks and other social environments that promote safe and healthy behaviors.

Mental health services need to be provided and funded. Without them, we lose a key piece in prevention.

We need a culture of collaboration and integration between the public, private and non-profit sectors. Arizona is rich with non-profit organizations, but we seldom bring them to the table together at the same time.

We also should promote more effective communication between law enforcement, prosecutors, mental health professionals and corrections and parole agencies. For instance, if we break down silos between corrections and parole agencies, this may create benefits for our citizens as they re-enter society.

After incarceration, prisoners need an opportunity to gain stability and access to resources. Post-incarceration services are lacking and need to be funded better with the goal of helping people reintegrate into society.

Our conversation must include victims. Improved services for victims, including culturally appropriate support, are needed to further the goal of justice for all.

We need to foster a political conversation that focuses on prevention, and not just on campaign promises about punishment. We and our legislators need to agree not only that action is needed, but that those actions have value, and require resources.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions at the Tucson Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Work with prisoner re-entry programs.
- Serve as a mentoring or literacy volunteer for adults (or youth in jail or juvenile detention).
- Support funding for improved behavioral health care and substance abuse treatment and better mental health treatment facilities.
- Continue advocating at the Legislature for criminal justice reform, and work to elect legislators that will advance criminal justice reform.
- Support “wrap-around” services for recently released inmates.

- Work on removing barriers to re-entry, such as a lack of education and counseling programs.
- Support programs to assist re-entry, such as restoration of rights for persons who successfully complete sentences.
- Continue to volunteer to Arizona Town Hall and continue conversations about issues of importance.
- Promote “Grow in Place” as a key element to safer neighborhoods.
- Strive to further my own education.
- Help organize a panel in Southern Arizona to discuss private prisons.
- Leverage my sphere of influence to educate and involve others; be a connector and a champion.
- Share what I have learned with others.
- Teach my students about criminal justice issues relative to health and planning issues in an integrated planning process.
- Look at mandatory sentencing laws, time-off sentences for time worked, and low-level drug laws to change the system and reduce the prison population.
- Advocate increased funding for teachers, counselors, and school nurses.
- Work with the Legislature to change laws on marijuana possession, mandatory sentencing and private prisons.
- Do not ignore families “left behind” when a family member is incarcerated.
- Work on reform with victim perspectives in mind.
- Vote to fund more law enforcement officers.
- Publicize the idea that education and criminal justice programs are an investment, not an expense.
- Help organize a panel in southern Arizona discussing private prisons.
- Support drug prevention and education programs in schools.
- Talk with other community members about the need for change in the criminal justice system to help them be better educated voters.
- Collaborate with local agencies and organizations to improve services.
- Provide programming for girls with incarcerated parents—including advocacy and civic engagement training.
- Actively serve on relevant coalitions and committees.
- Encourage adults in my circles to engage in mentorship programs for elementary aged children especially in marginalized communities.
- Continually work to get people to vote through phone calls, emails and social media.
- Learn more about issues, support education so children will be less vulnerable to becoming a criminal, work so the prisons provide more preparation for entering life after prison, learn more about privatized prisons.
- Try to better myself and tell others about what I have learned.
- Support candidates who believe in positive change in our criminal justice system.
- Continue to explore and pursue using my skill set and career to impact criminal justice system.

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