



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

Mass DA's Unanimously Support Re-Entry Funds to Fight Recidivism

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The Massachusetts District Attorney's Association voted to unanimously support the \$5 Million budget request (attached) of Community Resources for Justice for community based residential re-entry programs designed to decrease recidivism – the return to jail of the newly freed.

"The recent study of Massachusetts incarceration done by the Council of State Governments– at the request of all three branches of state government – made very clear that while we do not share in the national crisis of mass incarceration, we do have a challenge of recidivism," said Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey, the president of the Massachusetts District Attorney's Association.

According to data published by The Sentencing Project, Massachusetts's incarceration rate of 179 per 100,000 of population is now 49th lowest of the 50 states in overall incarceration, just slightly ahead of Maine. The rate in the Commonwealth is less than half the national average of 458 and less than a quarter of the highest state, Louisiana, at 776.

"The low incarceration rate in Massachusetts is not an accident. It is the result of significant hard work by the Legislature, the District Attorneys and other stakeholders in crafting a system that keeps incarceration and crime rates simultaneously low," [i]District Attorney Morrissey said. While those numbers also arguably suggest that the appropriate individuals are being incarcerated, "it is clear that we can do more to reduce recidivism," Morrissey said.

"In 2012, the District Attorneys led the effort to reform problematic sentencing for many kinds of drug charges while increasing the weights that trigger those charges," Morrissey said. "At the same time, we were pushing for increased post-sentencing and post-incarceration support and supervision, implementing drug courts and diversion programs and working directly to stop recidivism."

The MDAA welcomes the advocacy of Community Resources for Justice in this worthy cause. The Justice Reinvestment in Massachusetts Report [ii] (on P. 4) that nearly half of people admitted to county Houses of Corrections and more than a quarter of people admitted to state Department of Corrections facilities are on community supervision at the time of their admission.

"It is pretty clear from those numbers that recidivism is the fire where we should be pouring more of our water," Morrissey said. "The District Attorneys have been working at this for quite a while. We believe Community Resources for Justice and the defense bar, in advocating here to meaningfully address recidivism, reinforce our position at a critical time; we hope this funding is written into law."