



March 27, 2020

Decompressing Our Jails and Prisons During the Coronavirus Pandemic

There's talk about releasing non-violent people from Illinois State prisons to protect against and stop the spread of COVID-19. If you have a family member that's in prison for a non-violent conviction and you will support their release from prison by providing housing and support, email me at repford@lashawnford.com. I will get your letter to Governor J. B. Pritzker. I would also like supporting emails from family and friends about why the person should be released. I have advocated for nonviolent people to be released from prison for years.

I've introduced and passed resolutions to urge the governor to release non-violent people from our state prisons. I have also passed resolutions to urge prosecutors and judges not to recommend sentencing non-violent people to prison.

On 5.29.2014, my House Resolution lost 047-067-000, and it reads: Urges the Governor and the Department of Corrections to discourage prosecutors from recommending and judges from sentencing low-level drug offenders to the county jail or the Department of Corrections. Also, urges the Governor and the Director of Corrections to do everything in their power to have low-level drug offenders currently serving sentences in Department of Corrections facilities released to home confinement.

I didn't give up. I continued to push and the House of Representatives agreed that we should not hold non-violent people in prison. On 3-5-2015, I passed HR 0163 unanimously in the House of Representatives, adopted by both the Republicans and Democrats. It reads: Urges the Governor and the Department of Corrections to discourage prosecutors from recommending and judges from sentencing low-level drug offenders to the county jail or the Department of Corrections. Link to the HR:

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?GA=99&DocTypeID=HR&DocNum=163&GAID=13&SessionID=88&LegID=87887>

ON 6-22-17, I passed HR 0005 in the House of Representatives, with the resolution being adopted unanimously by both Republicans and Democrats. This reads: Urges the Governor and the Department of Corrections to discourage prosecutors from recommending and judges from sentencing low-level drug offenders to the county jail or the Department of Corrections. Link to the HR:

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?GA=100&DocTypeID=HR&DocNum=5&GAID=14&SessionID=91&LegID=99320>

As the state continues to build on its robust response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to decompress our prisons and jails and have people shelter at home rather than in jail or prison, especially those with lower level offenses. This is something that we can do now to bend the curve and slow the advance of this epidemic.

Please email me with your individual cases and stories so we can let Governor Pritzker know that this is something that needs to happen now.

Let's ALL be safe!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LSF', written in a cursive style.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District