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# THE JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE

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EXECUTIVE ORDER 2019-03

ANNUAL REPORT

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# JEO INITIATIVE

## Introduction

*“When we think about criminal justice reform, we can’t have that conversation without thinking about equity and opportunity. The lack of equity and opportunity is what leads people to the justice system. And then when they come out of it, it is the lack of equity and opportunity that leads them back; so we have to pair these two issues to address how we create real paths so that they don’t enter the criminal justice system in the first place.”*

- Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton

Over the last four decades, Illinois’ prison population has ballooned by more than 30,000 people— increasing from 10,000 in 1977 to 40,278 in 2018—without a commensurate improvement in public safety. People have been removed, shamed, and punished. Public safety has not always improved, and communities have not necessarily become stronger.

Over the last decade, Illinois has experienced a shift in thinking around these issues. Various stakeholders across the government, business, and nonprofit sectors have worked together to make strides in criminal justice reform. The Pritzker-Stratton administration seeks to go a step further by making it clear that the status quo is neither sustainable nor acceptable for reducing imprisonment, increasing public safety, and strengthening communities.

Therefore, on February 11, 2019, Governor J.B. Pritzker signed Executive Order 2019-03 to establish the Justice, Equity, and Opportunity (JEO) Initiative within the

Office of the Lieutenant Governor. The JEO Initiative centralizes the state’s justice reform efforts and promotes economic opportunities for communities impacted by a broken criminal justice system. The JEO Initiative is a first-of-its-kind effort in Illinois and serves as a model for the nation’s efforts to reform the justice system by:

- a) **Convening and creating a collaborative environment, especially among stakeholders, State Agencies and the organizations they work with;**
- b) **Improving communications across State Agencies and ensuring a coordinated, holistic effort to transform the criminal justice system and implement those changes;**
- c) **Supporting research and pilot programs that will test groundbreaking efforts to reform the criminal justice system, and provide data analysis to assess program efficacy and guide new efforts; and**
- d) **Advising decision making to ensure the different branches of Illinois government work proactively to create a more fair and equitable criminal justice system.**

On January 1 of each year, the JEO Initiative will deliver a report to the Office of the Governor describing the accomplishments of the Initiative, the opportunities and challenges the Initiative encounters, and the goals and deliverables for the upcoming year.

## 2019

The JEO Initiative began its work by conducting listening sessions with more than 500 stakeholders who represent community organizations, advocacy groups, law enforcement, state agencies, legislators, and leaders from across the state who recognize the value of the Initiative:

*“Establishment of the JEO and all that it embodies is of the utmost importance in uniting and elevating the work of state government on behalf of all of Illinois’ residents. The JEO encourages us to think about who has been left out and marginalized and drives us to develop strategies to correct these injustices.”*

- Grace Hou, Secretary,  
Illinois Department of Human Services

*“The intentionality of the JEO to engage in authentic and meaningful conversations with all types of stakeholders provides us with a clear vision of the commitment to ensure that diverse voices are heard around such an important issue. I’m looking forward to continuing the conversation to ensure that marginalized communities get the justice they deserve through equity-centered criminal justice reform in Illinois.”*

- Representative Celina Villanueva,  
Illinois House of Representatives,  
21st District

*“This is a new experience for a lot of community groups—having an open-door policy with the Administration around issues of justice. I’m proud to say that when I go into rooms and ask whether community groups have met with the JEO—more often than not, they have.”*

- Sharone Mitchell, Jr., Executive Director,  
Illinois Justice Project



The executive order establishing the JEO Initiative is signed on February 11, 2019.



The JEO Initiative conducts listening sessions throughout Illinois to hear from those directly impacted by the state’s criminal justice system.

# JEO INITIATIVE

## Goals

The Initiative's work is centered around four goals that will guide the Initiative's short- and long-term work:

- a) **Address the social determinants of crime and incarceration;**
- b) **Improve equitable deflection and diversion opportunities from the justice system;**
- c) **Improve conditions and address the needs of vulnerable populations in correctional facilities; and**
- d) **Support positive reentry outcomes to reduce recidivism.**

## 2019 Deliverables

The Initiative advanced various deliverables for each of these goals during the first year.

### Goal #1: Address the social determinants of crime and incarceration.

- **Early Childhood Education:** The JEO Initiative formed a partnership with the Erikson Institute—one of the country's foremost child development research institutions—to develop a fellowship called the *Stratton Fellowship* for local and state officials, senior leaders of state agencies, judges, and law enforcement to gain a deeper understanding about how childhood trauma influences justice involvement and life outcomes.
- **Children of Incarcerated Parents:** The JEO Initiative supported the passage of HB 2649, which establishes the Children of Incarcerated Parents Task Force. The Task Force convenes advocates and law enforcement stakeholders to develop recommendations about policies and

procedures that reduce the impact of incarceration on children.

- **Non-Binary People and Trans Women:** The JEO Initiative has been working to increase the visibility of issues that impact non-binary people and trans women, including violence and access to health care. As part of the #HearOurVoices campaign, the Initiative has begun partnering with Howard Brown Health and other organizations to host a series of listening sessions with impacted residents to hear their ideas for solutions to these challenges.



The JEO Initiative conducts a listening session with non-binary people and trans women.

- **Racial Equity:** The JEO Initiative met with several governmental leaders within the state to discuss how to continuously improve on policies, programs and practices related to racial equity. The JEO Initiative is now working with other jurisdictions to host a racial equity training for government employees, with the goal of developing a racial equity framework for government leaders.

- **Access to Jobs:** The JEO Initiative supported SB 1965, which reduces restrictions for people with criminal records to get a license to work in the healthcare field. The new law allows people to obtain a waiver before they receive a job offer from an employer and reduces unnecessary barriers for people to work.
- **Transportation to Work and School:** The JEO Initiative supported SB 1786, or the License to Work Act, which forbids the suspension of driver's licenses for nonmoving violations and improves the ability for families to get to work and school. The law reflects the administration's commitment to helping low-income families and communities of color, who are disproportionately impacted by tickets and driver's license suspensions, pursue economic opportunity.
- **Violence Prevention:** The JEO Initiative has been working with various state agencies to develop violence prevention strategies. This includes supporting the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority's development of a statewide violence prevention plan and the Department of Public Health's violence prevention task force to develop a robust public health approach to violence prevention.
- **Data and Equity:** The JEO Initiative met with over 200 data and information leaders at the National Association for Justice Information Systems Conference

to explain the importance of data in shaping equitable strategies, such as Illinois' groundbreaking efforts to identify the communities that have the highest rates of unemployment, poverty, gun violence, and incarceration yet are underserved by state resources.

- **Reinvestment in Communities:** The cannabis legalization legislation, passed in the 2019 legislative session, is the most equity-centric adult-use cannabis law in the country. As part of its social equity provisions, the legislation allocates 25% of net revenues to the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) program, which invests in communities that are underserved, disproportionately impacted by economic disinvestment, and suffer from high rates of gun violence. The R3 program provides funding to five areas: civil legal aid, reentry services, violence prevention, youth development and economic development.



Illinois creates the most equity-centric adult use cannabis law in the country.

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The JEO Initiative, in conjunction with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, supports the R3 Board toward equitable implementation of the program.

## Goal #2: Improve equitable deflection and diversion opportunities from the justice system.

- **Reducing Juvenile Detention:** The JEO Initiative is collaborating with several stakeholders, including law enforcement and community-based organizations, to advise the Juvenile Intervention Support Center—one of the largest police stations in Illinois—on strategies to reduce juvenile crime and recidivism.
- **Alternatives to Prison:** The JEO Initiative is supporting the Adult Redeploy Illinois (ARI) program to reduce the number of people entering the Illinois Department of Corrections. The JEO Initiative spoke to nearly 250 representatives from ARI programs throughout Illinois to share the importance of diversion strategies at the county level.
- **Improving Court Responses:** The Initiative is collaborating with the Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court and Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts on strategies for state and local courts to address mental health and co-occurring conditions for people who have contact with the criminal justice system. A statewide convening will be planned for 2020.

## Goal #3: Improve conditions and address the needs of vulnerable populations in correctional facilities.

- **Voting:** A priority of the JEO Initiative has been continuing Lieutenant Governor Stratton's commitment to voting rights. For these reasons, the JEO Initiative helped to champion the passage of SB 2090, historic legislation which requires jails to allow detained individuals to vote. Once incarcerated people are released, jails are also required to give them a voter registration form and information about their voting rights.



Gov. Pritzker and Lt. Gov. Stratton celebrate bills advancing voting rights, sentencing reform, and civic education for justice-involved individuals.

- **Women:** The JEO Initiative has collaborated with First Lady MK Pritzker and the Women's Justice Institute to support gender responsive policies and programs and to ensure full implementation of the Women's Correctional Services Act. The Act requires the Department of Corrections to re-establish the department's Women's Division and to implement trauma-informed and gender-responsive practices within women's facilities. The Lieutenant Governor was the chief



**Lt. Gov. Stratton supports the historic graduation at Stateville Correctional Center.**

sponsor of the Women's Correctional Services Act while she was a member of the General Assembly. During the last few months, the Lieutenant Governor and First Lady have visited incarcerated women in facilities, including the Cook County Jail and Logan Correctional Center.

- **Sentencing and Rehabilitation:** The JEO Initiative and legislators conducted a listening session with incarcerated people to hear about the impact of sentencing laws. The JEO Initiative then supported the passage of HB 94, which expands the availability of sentence credits for incarcerated people who participate in rehabilitative classes and activities.



**Lt. Gov. Stratton and First Lady MK Pritzker meet with formerly incarcerated women.**



**Gov. Pritzker signs bill restoring parole review for youth facing long sentences.**

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- **Education:** The JEO Initiative supported various education efforts, including HB 2541, which requires prisons to provide civic education to people before they are released. The JEO Initiative supported a first-of-its-kind graduation of incarcerated men at Stateville Correctional Center, where seven men earned bachelor's degrees. Lieutenant Governor Stratton joined Professor Angela Davis, artist Chance the Rapper, and several other stakeholders to support the conferring of degrees.

## Goal #4: Support positive reentry outcomes to reduce recidivism.

- **Housing:** In July 2019, the JEO Initiative helped launch a housing program that allocates \$3 million for rental subsidies to formerly incarcerated individuals in counties throughout the state, including Cook, Champaign, and Lake. The JEO Initiative is also collaborating with various stakeholders on a housing reentry task force to consider various housing reentry opportunities, including expanding shelters and affordable housing.
- **Education:** The JEO Initiative is collaborating with the Office of the Treasurer to consider how formerly incarcerated individuals can have better access to tax-advantaged college savings programs for their children. The JEO Initiative is currently engaged in listening sessions with individuals who could benefit from such an effort.
- **Workforce Development:** The JEO Initiative is collaborating with the Chicago



JEO Director Quinn Rallins discusses reentry housing needs in a panel with agency directors.



Lt. Gov. Stratton and Treasurer Frerichs host a listening session about college savings for children of formerly incarcerated people.

Cook Workforce Partnership and other stakeholders via a grant allotted under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to assess reentry services and gaps for people returning from incarceration and to develop innovative re-entry initiatives.

- **Healthcare:** The JEO Initiative has worked with the Illinois Department of



Juvenile Justice and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services to begin enrolling IDJJ youth in Medicaid. In October 2019, more than 90 percent of the youth who were released had health insurance within one month of their release. The JEO Initiative also supported the passage of SB 1744, which requires the Department of Corrections to screen every person for Medicaid eligibility and assist those eligible with completing an application, ensuring they receive benefits as soon as possible after their release.

## 2020 Projected Deliverables

The Initiative works towards the following deliverables during its second year.

### Goal #1: Address the social determinants of crime and incarceration.

- **Implementing Cannabis Equity Through Reinvestment in Communities:** The JEO Initiative, in conjunction with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, will identify the eligible areas for the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Board to designate. The JEO Initiative will continue to work with the Board to ensure the program is implemented equitably, from the solicitation of applications to the distribution of resources.
- **Advancing Early Childhood Education Policy:** In January 2020, the JEO Initiative will collaborate with the Erikson Institute to launch the first cohort of Stratton Fellows to better understand how

childhood trauma influences justice involvement and life outcomes. The JEO Initiative will then work with local and state officials, senior leaders of state agencies, judges, and law enforcement to advance policies that address the relationship between trauma and justice involvement.

- **Advancing Children of Incarcerated Parents Policy:** The JEO Initiative will work with the Children of Incarcerated Parents Task Force (P.A. 101-0480) to develop recommendations on policies and procedures that reduce the impact of incarceration on children. The JEO Initiative will then work with stakeholders to advance helpful recommendations.
- **Developing Racial Equity Toolkit:** In January 2020, the JEO Initiative will work with other jurisdictions to host a training and conversation on racial equity, with the goal of developing a racial equity framework for state government leaders by 2021.
- **Advancing Policy for Non-Binary People and Trans Women:** The JEO Initiative will continue the listening campaign on issues that impact non-binary people and trans women through the #HearOurVoices campaign, and work with stakeholders to develop policy and program solutions.

### Goal #2: Improve equitable deflection and diversion opportunities from the justice system.

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- **Support Equitable Policies for Individuals in Custody:** The JEO Initiative will work with stakeholders to improve policies for people in custody. This includes ensuring that people are allowed a reasonable amount of phone calls to family members in a reasonable amount of time after their arrest.
  - **Safeguarding Restorative Justice Practices:** The JEO Initiative will work with stakeholders to improve the opportunities for restorative justice alternatives to incarceration. This includes ensuring the communications during restorative proceedings are conducted in a safe space, and not unnecessarily held against individuals who engage in the process.
  - **Statewide Convening for State and Local Courts to Address Mental Health:** In 2020, the JEO Initiative will collaborate with the Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court and the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts to host a convening for state and local courts to help address mental health and co-occurring conditions for people who have contact with the criminal justice system.
  - **Advising on Juvenile Detention Policy:** The JEO Initiative will continue to collaborate with stakeholders to develop a plan of action for the Juvenile Intervention Support Center—one of the largest police stations in Illinois—on how to reduce juvenile crime and recidivism. The JEO Initiative is on the JISC Advisory Council.
- Goal #3: Improve conditions and address the needs of vulnerable populations in correctional facilities.**
- **Women:** The JEO Initiative will collaborate with First Lady MK Pritzker, the Women’s Justice Institute, and the Hunt Institute to support gender-based responsive policies and programs, such as housing and mental health for formerly incarcerated women. The JEO Initiative will also help to ensure full implementation of the Women’s Correctional Services Act, to implement trauma-informed and gender-responsive practices within women’s facilities.
- Goal # 4: Support positive reentry outcomes to reduce recidivism.**
- **Restorative Justice Alternatives:** The JEO Initiative will work with the Prisoner Review Board to develop restorative justice options for individuals who are returning to their communities from the Department of Corrections and seek to repair the harm that was caused.
  - **Developing Reentry Housing Recommendations:** The JEO Initiative will be working with stakeholders from a Housing Reentry Task Force, the Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services, and Illinois Housing Development Authority to consider recommendations on how to improve housing for people who have been justice-involved.
  - **College Savings Listening Sessions:** The JEO Initiative will continue to collaborate with the Office of

the Treasurer on listening sessions throughout the state to meet formerly incarcerated individuals and better understand how tax-advantaged college savings programs could benefit their children.

## Conclusion

This is not an exhaustive list of the JEO Initiative's priorities, which will include advancing important legislation toward justice reform. The JEO Initiative has already begun collaborating with and convening stakeholders, to begin working towards these projected deliverables. The JEO Initiative wishes to provide a special thanks to the staff from both the Office of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor for their unwavering commitment to pursuing historic justice reform in Illinois.

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<sup>1</sup> David Olson and Don Stemen, *The Rise (and Partial Fall) of Illinois' Prison Population*, CTR. CRIM. JUST. RESEARCH, POL'Y & PRAC., LOY. UNIV. CHI. 1 (2018), <https://www.luc.edu/media/lucedu/criminaljustice/pdfs/prisonpopulationgrowthbulletinjune20183.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> ILLINOIS DEP'T OF CORRECTIONS, *Adult Inmate Population on June 30, 2018* (2018), [https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/reportsandstatistics/Documents/Department\\_Data\\_FY2018.pdf](https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/reportsandstatistics/Documents/Department_Data_FY2018.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Melissa Sanchez and Sandhya Kambhampati, *How Chicago Ticket Debt Sends Black Motorists Into Bankruptcy*, ProPublica Illinois (2018), <https://features.propublica.org/driven-into-debt/chicago-ticket-debt-bankruptcy/>