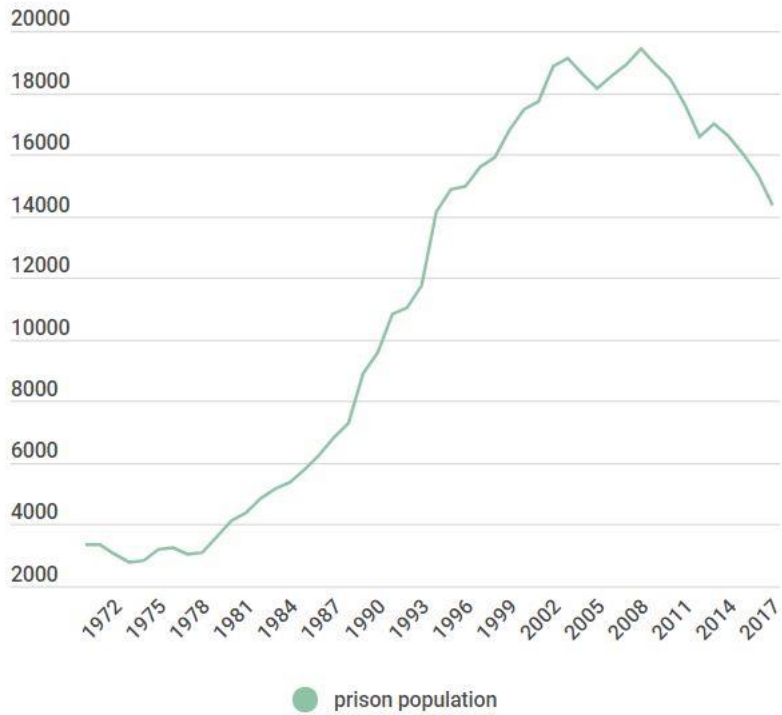




# CT Prison Population

## 1970-2017



# CONNECTICUT CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM FIELD SCAN

Prepared by the  
Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice  
January 2019

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CENTER FOR HEALTH,  
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# Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. A SHORT, INCOMPLETE HISTORY OF THE LAST 20 YEARS OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IN CONNECTICUT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>12</b>
3a. Survey Design	13
3b. Semi-Structured Interview Design	14
3c. Demographic Characteristics	15
<b>4. FINDINGS: EMERGENT THEMES</b>	<b>15</b>
Theme 1: The Necessity to Increase Funding for Community Organizing for Criminal Justice reform and Related Issues	15
Theme 2: The Necessity of the Criminal Justice Field to Align with Other Fields	18
Theme 3: The Necessity for a Shared Table on Criminal Justice Reform	20
Theme 4: The Necessity to Better Integrate Directly Impacted People Into the Criminal Justice Reform Field in Meaningful Way	23
Theme 5: The Necessity to Give Better Resources and Attention to Formerly and Currently Incarcerated Women	24
<b>5. KEY FINDINGS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>6. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>Appendix A: Interview Participants</i>	<b>32</b>
<i>Appendix B: Detailed Research Methodology &amp; Limitations</i>	<b>34</b>
<i>Appendix C: Interview Protocol - Connecticut Criminal Justice Reform Field Scan</i>	<b>36</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Once the state with one of the highest rates of incarceration in the country – and one marked by severe racial disparities – today, Connecticut is on a new path of decarceration. Over the last 20 years, with advocates, community groups, and elected and appointed officials working together, Connecticut has closed prisons and expanded reentry programs. The state ended the death penalty and equalized the sentences between crack and powder cocaine (among the first states to do so), raised the age for prosecuting juveniles as adults, closed youth facilities, and overhauled its juvenile justice system. Connecticut opted out of the federal ban on welfare benefits for persons convicted of drug offenses, established a medical marijuana program and decriminalized possession of small amounts of marijuana. Furthermore, we banned the box on employment discrimination for formerly incarcerated persons, and more. As a result of this work, Connecticut has cut the correctional population by nearly 30% since its peak in 2008.

The great strides taken toward ending mass incarceration in Connecticut are the result of the persistent work of grassroots leadership, devoted advocates and dedicated elected officials. Criminal justice reform has become mainstream in our state, such that it is not a partisan issue, with multiple examples of Republican and Democratic governors and lawmakers supporting reform. The last

governor, Dannel Malloy, made justice reform his signature issue and over eight years in office enacted many needed and progressive changes.

Today, Connecticut is a national leader in the fight to end mass incarceration in the United States. And while other states often get more attention – Texas because it is conservative; California because it is the largest; New York because it’s a media capital of the world – Connecticut has taken criminal justice reform, across a range of critical measures, further than most other states and stands today in the vanguard of reform.

However, the fight continues; battles have yet to be waged and won.

The State of Connecticut has a unified incarceration system, meaning that both jails (that imprison pre-trial defendants) and prisons (that imprison people already sentenced) are overseen by the Connecticut State Department of Correction. Five other states have the same integrated system, including Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Currently,<sup>1</sup> Connecticut has 15 correctional facilities that are operational. Thirteen facilities incarcerate adult males, one imprisons females, and one is exclusively for incarcerating teenagers. As of 2016, there were 5,336 correctional staff positions with a budget of \$608 million.<sup>2</sup>

Incarceration in Connecticut increased dramatically from a total population of just 3,112 in 1969

<sup>1</sup> Connecticut State Department of Correction Research Unit (2018). Average confined inmate population and legal status. Available: <https://bit.ly/2tpjAL4>

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Corrections (2016). Connecticut 2016. Available: <https://bit.ly/2GNotTm>

to a high of 19,403 in 2008<sup>3</sup> – a 523.49% increase. However, the imprisoned population currently is at an all-time low of 13,378<sup>4</sup> – or a 31% decrease since the 2008 high. Simultaneously, crime rates and arrests have also decreased by 26% and 29%, respectively, since 2008.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, there are still intolerable racial disparities in incarceration in Connecticut. According to the ACLU,<sup>6</sup> our state ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the United States in disproportionately incarcerating Black adults (8<sup>th</sup> in incarcerating Latinx adults) and detains ten Black children for every one white child.

There are also glaring racial disparities in parole in Connecticut. Our state has “special parole,”<sup>7</sup> which burdens returning citizens with increased correctional supervision requirements that often leads to reincarceration. Of the 2,569 Connecticut residents on special parole in 2018,<sup>8</sup> more than 40% were Black, while only 10.1%<sup>9</sup> of residents self-identified as such. Conversely, only 27% of special parolees were white, while 77.6%<sup>10</sup> of the state population is white. This is unacceptable.

It is precisely because Connecticut has made such strides that the next phase of reform is now far more complicated. What must yet be done to continue decarceration in Connecticut? Now that criminal justice reform is more mainstream, with a greater array of groups working on justice reform

than ever before, what types of collaborations are needed (and wanted) to pursue transformative change in this new era? Given how many other systems are impacted by mass incarceration – from education to health, to housing and labor – how can we build alliances, networks, and connections with advocates in other sectors? Do such connections exist now, and if so, what lessons have been learned thus far? If Connecticut is leading the country in the fight to end mass incarceration (which it is), where can we turn to find models of reform with groups working under similar conditions?

It was questions like these that led us to conduct the Connecticut Criminal Justice Field Scan. With support from the Tow Foundation, we sought to connect to and talk with stakeholders across our state about their views regarding criminal justice reform. Our guiding principal? Listen methodically to those battling on the front lines, in the trenches fighting for the voiceless – for those are the people that will provide the wisdom required to propel Connecticut forward. In an informal process, we met with dozens of those advocates, organizers, lawmakers, formerly incarcerated people, parents, students, organizers, and just about anyone that could provide valuable insight to shed light on the best path to make a more just Connecticut. We discussed criminal justice reform, the

<sup>3</sup> Connecticut State Department of Correction Research Unit (2018). Total supervised population count. Available: <https://bit.ly/2EeqokZ>

<sup>4</sup> Connecticut State Department of Correction Research Unit (2018). Average confined inmate population and legal status. Available: <https://bit.ly/2tpjAL4>

<sup>5</sup> Perkins, Julia (2018). “Connecticut’s Prison Population Drops to lowest Level in 24 Years.” *Newstimes*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2TTaXEp>

<sup>6</sup> American Civil Liberties Union Connecticut (2018). “Issues: Connecticut.” Available: <https://bit.ly/2SYj8C7>

<sup>7</sup> Kirby, Michelle (2018). Special parole. *Office of Legislative Research*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2SCidbc>

<sup>8</sup> American Civil Liberties Union Connecticut (2018). “Issues: Connecticut.” Available: <https://bit.ly/2SYj8C7>

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2010). Summary File 4; generated using American FactFinder. Available: <https://bit.ly/2dmQmHD>

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2010). Summary File 9; generated using American FactFinder. Available: <https://bit.ly/2dmQmHD>

Malloy Administration and what (at the time) might come next, problems on the ground, and problems in the Capitol and in City Halls around the state.

Those informal conversations led us to setting out the Field Scan and its corresponding goals and methodology. We established four primary objectives:

- First, we wanted to review where Connecticut stands in its efforts to end mass incarceration and for that assessment to be directly informed by groups working across the field.
- Second, we wanted to better understand how the Connecticut criminal justice movement – and those who are connected to criminal justice reform efforts, but who are not *per se* criminal justice reformers – perceived progress in our state comparatively to states across the nation. This includes learning what further efforts were needed to advance decarceration – both now in the 2019 legislative session under a new gubernatorial administration, and also long-term.
- Third, we wanted an increased understanding of the range of groups, coalitions, and networks currently working to end mass incarceration in Connecticut, and to uncover new configurations and relationships that may have developed.

- Finally, we wanted to bring together a wide range of voices – familiar leaders, directly impacted people, and other individuals on the ground around the state – to solicit input regarding the best path forward to further strengthen the criminal justice reform movement in Connecticut.

With these goals, we set out develop the Connecticut Criminal Justice Reform Field Scan. This report is the result.

Our hope is that this scan proves useful to those who believe it is possible to end mass incarceration and the drug war in Connecticut, and want to find ways to work together to do so.

## 2. A SHORT, INCOMPLETE HISTORY OF THE LAST 20 YEARS OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IN CONNECTICUT

In 1971, President Nixon declared a war on drugs. At the time, Connecticut’s prison and jail population was 3,328. Connecticut, like most states, didn’t respond immediately to the declaration of a war on drugs; it took time. (Connecticut’s next door neighbor, New York, was the first state to enact the drug war in state justice policy, though the Rockefeller Drug Laws, passed in 1973).<sup>11</sup> President Regan took office in 1981, and soon moved to reinvigorate the War on Drugs nationally. By that time, states were following suit – Connecticut among them.

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<sup>11</sup> Parsons, Jim. (2005). End of an era?: The impact of drug law reform in new york city. Vera Institute of Justice. Available: <https://bit.ly/2tsAboQ>

Though framed by politicians as an attempt to rid the streets from the clutches of illicit substances, the policies enacted during this time had the effect of criminalizing low income communities of color, especially Black communities – and wildly inflating the prison population.

The priority on enforcement drowned out resources for treatment-based approaches. This connection is clear in the heroin epidemic and corresponding AIDS epidemic due to needle sharing. In 1988, the New York Times reported that the supply and demand for methadone was so desperate that waiting lists for drug treatment were months long; over 30% of prospective patients on waiting lists relapsed, died or became incarcerated.<sup>12</sup> In this same year, the Welfare Reform Act of 1988<sup>13</sup> disallowed the use of state insurance to pay for drug treatment. President Clinton’s Welfare Reform Act pushed funding into state prisons. Consequently, the primary state funded ‘in-patient drug treatment’ was the Connecticut state prison. Ultimately, persons desperately in need of treatment intentionally and unintentionally landed in prison to receive available health care.

At the national level, the Welfare Reform Act of 1988 prohibited using Medicaid payment for drug treatment if you were a person convicted of a drug felony.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, persons with drug felonies

were barred from accessing drug treatment programs leading to an onslaught of incentivized plea bargains. Simultaneously, during the crack and cocaine epidemic police were maliciously upgrading arrest charges and prosecutors were convicting individuals with substance abuse disorders by overcharging people as high-level drug distributors. These exaggerated charges furthered the systematic corruption of plea bargains. Despite the number of whites who used drugs outpacing black use 75% to 25%,<sup>15</sup> Black residents received much harsher criminal sentences for crack related arrests than whites did for powder cocaine offenses.

In the 1990s, as its adult prison population grew exponentially, Connecticut was notorious for its indiscriminate arrest and detainment of non-white youth. At this time, Connecticut incarcerated 2,000 children ranging from 8 to 14 years-old for petty domestic offenses, including, but not limited to, truancy violations and running away from home.<sup>16</sup> The majority of youth were detained for misdemeanor offenses and upon detention without programming-based intervention, Black and Latinx youth were continuously detained to jails conspicuously described as residential centers and the notorious Long Lane training school. Described as educational centers by the State, youth endured hazardous conditions, including violent abuse from prison guards.

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<sup>12</sup> Hamilton, Robert A. (2018). “Twin Evils Spur Methadone Clinics.” *New York Times*. Available: <https://nyti.ms/2EeXoLC>

<sup>13</sup> Chilman, Catherine S. (1992). Welfare reform or revision? The family support act of 1988. *Social Service Review* 66.3. Available: <https://bit.ly/2S4DnJS>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Connecticut Law Revision Commission (1997). Drug policy in connecticut and strategy options report. Connecticut State Capitol. Available: <https://bit.ly/2EfFNBK>

<sup>16</sup> Mendel, Richard A. (2013). Juvenile justice reform in connecticut: How collaboration and commitment have improved public safety and outcomes for youth. *Justice Policy Institute*. Available: <https://tinyurl.com/y3gumruy>

Youth detention centers in New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford were regularly overcrowded. Youth facilities were intended to hold a max of 64 imprisoned youth, but averaged 114 per day.<sup>17</sup> Many of the holding cells lacked basic necessities like toilets. Severe overcrowding contributed to overly punitive responses from correctional officers. Violence was employed by non-skilled correctional staff to force orderly conduct in the absence of asset-based youth programming. 544 reports of incidents of physical restraint were documented from 1997-1998 at Long Lane Training School alone.<sup>18</sup> Children were regularly shackled to the bed, and two suicide attempts occurred monthly, on average. The suicide of Tabatha Ann Brendle in 1998 forced Connecticut to investigate Long Lane Training School where she was confined.<sup>19</sup>

These were largely the children of parents most impacted by the war on drugs. Rather than embracing this forgotten generation with a systematic acknowledgment of the lack of support, these children were routinely being punished by the state for leaving unsafe homes. Following incarceration, the absence of any education or general life skills training while imprisoned led to a tragic cycle of recidivism.

By the mid-90s, the incarceration crisis in Connecticut was clear even to law makers. In 1995 – during the height of the modern War on Drugs era

– the Judiciary Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly ordered the Connecticut Law Revision Commission to conduct a study of the state’s drug policy that was “broad enough to present a substantive report on the ramifications of our current drug policy and of alternative models” and to make “recommendations for appropriate modification of laws.”<sup>20</sup> The co-chair of the Judiciary Committee at that time was Representative Mike Lawlor – who served most recently as the Undersecretary for Criminal Justice for Governor Dannel Malloy. The study focused on five major areas:

1. The effectiveness of current criminal penalties for the illegal sale and possession of controlled substances;
2. The effect that alteration of criminal penalties for illegal sale and possession would have on the incidence and treatment of substance abuse, the incidence of other crime, the overcrowding of correctional facilities, and the availability of resources within the law enforcement and criminal justice systems;
3. The effectiveness of current substance abuse treatment and education programs;
4. The relationship between welfare and the illegal sale and possession of drugs; and
5. The outcomes of drug control programs in other states and countries including at least one study of the medicalization of the

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<sup>17</sup> Mendel, Richard A. (2013). Juvenile justice reform in connecticut: How collaboration and commitment have improved public safety and outcomes for youth. *Justice Policy Institute*. Available: <https://tinyurl.com/y3gumruy>

<sup>18</sup> Connecticut Law Revision Commission (1997). Drug policy in connecticut and strategy options report. Connecticut State Capitol. Available: <https://bit.ly/2EfFNBK>

<sup>19</sup> Mendel, Richard A. (2013). Juvenile justice reform in connecticut: How collaboration and commitment have improved public safety and outcomes for youth. *Justice Policy Institute*. Available: <https://tinyurl.com/y3gumruy>

<sup>20</sup> Connecticut Law Revision Commission (1997). Drug policy in connecticut and strategy options report. Connecticut State Capitol. Available: <https://bit.ly/2EfFNBKs>

drug laws and the effect that these programs have had on crime, welfare, and substance abuse.

In September 1996, the Commission issued a Preliminary Staff Report providing an overview of Connecticut's drug policy and alternative policies for the regulation of drugs, including harm reduction, decriminalization of illicit drugs, and modification of marijuana penalties. The overview included a review of changes in other states, including Arizona, Massachusetts, California, and Ohio; it also included a review of European and Australian drug policies, which were much more health-oriented than those in the United States.

On January 21, 1997, the Commission presented its full *Drug Policy in Connecticut and Strategy Options Report to the Judiciary Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly*. The report contained recommendations for establishing a drug policy coordinating office, statewide drug policy revisions, improved data collection and evaluation of policies and programs, establishing a substance abuse policy council, and reviewed public health strategy and criminal justice strategy options. The report – widely considered a model for a comprehensive review of state drug policies – would become the basis for advocacy for drug law and criminal justice reform for years to come.

In 1996, coupled with recent lawsuits that had been filed, youth justice advocates in Connecticut won a victory with \$16 million in funding for a

treatment plan, accompanied with \$62 million in savings realized through the downsizing of Long Lane Training School and other inefficient youth programs.<sup>21</sup> On the heels of this 1996 reinvestment for treatment, the 1993 juvenile class action lawsuit (*Emily J. v. Weicker*) would be resolved in 1997.<sup>22</sup> The Emily J. Lawsuit addressed the allegations of detention center misconduct *via* five years of federal court supervision and retraining staff in behavioral management.<sup>23</sup> In 1999, Connecticut reassembled its Judicial Branch to streamline effective justice *via* the consolidation of adult and juvenile probation offices. These victories began a long string of reform won by groups that eventually formed, in 2001, into the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance – a model for reform.

By 1999, the drug war in Connecticut led prisons to become so excessively overcrowded that prisoners were routinely sent from their home state of Connecticut to prisons in Virginia, including a “supermax” where two Connecticut prisoners died in 18 months.<sup>24</sup> Families and community groups fought the transfers. The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit. The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities issued a critical report. The Connecticut Office Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities investigated mental health conditions at the facility. This advocacy forced the state to stop transfers to the supermax; while the state continued to send people to detention in another Virginia facility, the fight by family members and advocates spurred

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<sup>21</sup> Mendel, Richard (undated). Juvenile justice reform in connecticut. *Justice Policy Institute*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2TUB91l>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> National Center for Youth Law (2016). *Emily J. v. Weicker*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2DQsh6h>

<sup>24</sup> Schrantz, Dennis, DeBor, Stephen, Mauer, Mark (2018). Decarceration strategies. Available: <https://bit.ly/2MhfDzr>

even more advocacy and organizing on the ground in the state.

By 2003, community groups who had taken up the recommendations from the 1997 Law Revision Commission report were now organizing in communities across the state, taking aim at racially biased drug policies, especially the crack and powder cocaine disparity. In Connecticut, as elsewhere, crack and powder cocaine were treated differently, even though they were the same drug: The only differences being that a.) crack is cocaine with baking soda added to it, and b.) the perception that Black people use crack and white people use cocaine. As research shows, it's actually white people who use crack more than Black people.). In Connecticut, it took one ounce of cocaine to trigger the same 5-year mandatory minimum as only .5 grams of crack.

The community work for reform spurred lawmakers to action. In 2004, Connecticut became the first state to pass bipartisan legislation concerning prison overcrowding, rightly titled, the *Prison Overcrowding Act*.<sup>25</sup> These changes unified all forms of supervision, detention and incarceration, thus ending the administrative dysfunction that contributed to Connecticut's once extremely high recidivism rate. This reform package increased prison releases and reduced probation and parole technical violations.<sup>26</sup> It also called for the launching of the pilot project for Justice Reinvestment.

In 2005, after a long fight led by community groups, Connecticut finally passed legislation equalizing penalties for crack and powder cocaine – Connecticut House Bill 6635<sup>27</sup>. In a sign of the power of community groups built to win reform, the bill was actually first vetoed by Governor M. Jodi Rell, and then community groups came back and forced a compromise that Rell had to sign. Connecticut became the first state to enact such a reform, long before similar changes were made at the federal level over a decade later under the Obama Administration.

During this period, the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance continued its progress winning reform: youth admissions decreased by nearly 40% from 2002-2009 (though, like with adult oriented reforms, racial disparities persisted at alarming rates.)

By 2008, the Connecticut prison population peaked at 19,413.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, from 1980 to 2007, the Connecticut prison population rose by more than 350% – an astonishing increase. Unfortunately, years of progress was nearly unraveled when a horrific, 2007 high-profile case of home invasion committed by two paroled individuals caused public outrage.<sup>28</sup> In response, Governor Jodi Rell (R) issue an executive order directing the parole board

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<sup>25</sup> Blair, Russell (2019). "Connecticut Legislators Have Introduced the First Legal Marijuana Bill of 2019. Here's What It Would Do." *Hartford Courant*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2GNs3O9>

<sup>26</sup> Schrantz, Dennis, DeBor, Stephen, Mauer, Mark (2018). Decarceration strategies. Available: <https://bit.ly/2MhfDzr>

<sup>27</sup> The Razor Wire (2005). "Rolling Back Drug War Apartheid in Connecticut." *November Coalition*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2DMq7Vd>

<sup>29</sup> Connecticut State Department of Correction Research Unit (2018). Total supervised population count. Available: <https://bit.ly/2EeqokZ>

<sup>28</sup> Collins, David (2017). "Cheshire, Connecticut, Home Invasion Murders, 10 years Later." *USA Today*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2TUwfkP>

to suspend parole for all persons serving a sentencing for a violent offense.<sup>29</sup> Alongside ending parole opportunities for people convicted of violent offenses, Governor Rell required that any person with parole violations, including technical parole violations, to immediately return to prison to serve the remainder of their sentence.<sup>30</sup> On March 1, 2008, the Governor passed a law making home invasion a Class A felony under the Connecticut General Statutes 53a-100aa. The statute also increased the penalty for night burglaries to a Class B felony with a 5-year minimum.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this setback for reform, after years of advocacy by community groups, families, lawmakers, and juvenile justice and adult criminal justice reformers, the state was on the verge of a downward trend in its prison population that continues to this day. And strong organizing and advocacy continued: in 2010, the last legislative session under Republican, Governor Jodi M. Rell, community groups and advocates passed *Ban the Box* legislation; Rell vetoed the bill. Advocates pushed and won an override of the veto – making Connecticut the sixth state to pass *Ban the Box* legislation, prohibiting *state* employers from making inquiries into an applicant’s criminal history at the onset of the employment process, except under certain circumstances.<sup>32</sup>

When Democrat Dannel Malloy ran for Governor

that same year (2010), he did so on a platform that included advancing many of the very same criminal justice reforms demanded by impacted communities throughout the state. And when he won and took the governor’s mansion in 2011, he worked to follow through on this promise of making change. Malloy’s criminal justice platform was adopted from community groups and advocates, and the new governor devoted his political capital to advancing the cause of criminal justice reform.

The reform measures passed during the Malloy administration during this period include:

- 2011: Risk Reduction Credits which rewards incarcerated individuals for perceived appropriate behavior.<sup>33</sup> The success of risk reduction credits facilitated the expedited release of persons leading to the closure of two prisons: Bergin and Gates correctional institution.
- 2011: Decriminalization of possession of marijuana<sup>34</sup>
- 2012: Death penalty repeal<sup>35</sup>
- 2012: Driving Under the Influence Home Confinement Program<sup>36</sup> – provides those incarcerated for DUI offenses the option to participate in a variety of substance abuse courses, allows for house arrest, etc.

<sup>29</sup> Stuart, Christine (2007). “Gov. Rell Bans Parole for Crimes of Violence.” *The New York Times*. Available: <https://nyti.ms/2S8Pjdm>

<sup>30</sup> Office of the Governor (2007). “Governor Rell Orders Paroles Suspended for Violent Offenders.” *CHRO: Affirmative Action, Connecticut Office of the Governor*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2GPTfOj>

<sup>31</sup> Connecticut Gen Stat § 53a-100aa (2012). Available: <https://bit.ly/2ts8VPY>

<sup>32</sup> Orange Tree (2013). *Ban-the-box – states, and local initiatives*. Available: <https://tinyurl.com/y3b6z8ul>

<sup>33</sup> Connecticut State Department of Correction (2016). Risk reduction earned credit. Available: <https://bit.ly/2Eg4L3O>

<sup>34</sup> NBC Connecticut (2011). “Marijuana Decriminalization Bill Passes.” Available: <https://tinyurl.com/y45zue2o>

<sup>35</sup> Ariosto, David (2012). “Connecticut Becomes 17th State to Abolish Death Penalty.” *Cable News Network*. Available: <https://cnn.it/2XbrKnY>

<sup>36</sup> Connecticut State Department of Correction (2016). Risk reduction earned credit. Available: <https://bit.ly/2Eg4L3O>

- 2012: Raise the Age – increased the age of adult criminal jurisdiction from age 17 to age 18. This legislation also included measures to decrease school suspensions and expulsions and additional youth justice policies
- 2015: Malloy initiates Connecticut’s “Second Chance Society”<sup>37</sup> – a combination of reentry strategies and bipartisan legislative reforms
- 2016: Ban the Box legislation was expanded to include private employers.<sup>38</sup>
- 2017: Bail reform: Governors Bill 7044, *An Act Concerning Pretrial Justice Reform*,<sup>39</sup> to decrease the numbers of defendants held on bail. While this bill did not entirely end cash bail in the state, it require that persons charged for only misdemeanors should not be charged monetary impositions, nor should any person held on bail wait more than 45 days to see a judge. (It is important to note that the main opposition to bail reform comes from the bond industry, concerned that up to 1,000 bond agents may lose their jobs.)<sup>40</sup>

As a result of the foundation for reform built by community organizing and advocacy, coupled with

the leadership by Governor Malloy and the legislature, Connecticut has seen a sustained decrease in its prison population for the last 10 years.

As noted by the Sentencing Project in a 2018 report,<sup>41</sup> Connecticut has made significant strides in the fight to end mass incarceration:

- More than 25% drop in prison population from 2007 (19,438)<sup>42</sup> -2016 (to 14,532)
- Nearly 30% drop in index crime rate – 27% through 2016 – including both violent and property crime rates; Overall crime in Connecticut is at a 50-year low.
- Arrests are down by more than -32%
- New prison commitments are down nearly 30% through 2016.
- Returns to prison is down by approximately 55% through 2016
- Closing facilities: The closure of three correctional facilities, a juvenile detention center, and housing units in three additional facilities.
- Saving taxpayers money: The state has saved nearly \$40 million per year as a result of these reforms

By 2018, when Connecticut’s prison population dropped to its lowest in 24 years, the state also enjoyed a significant drop in crime rates – from 2011

<sup>37</sup> Harr, Dan (2015). “Malloy To Advocate For “Second Chance Society” In Major Address.” *Los Angeles Times*. Available: <https://tinyurl.com/y5mabt2z>

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, Jackson (2017). “Connecticut ‘Ban the Box’ Law Effective January 1.” *The National Law Review*. Available: <https://tinyurl.com/y6z82xeh>

<sup>39</sup> Governor Bill 7044 (2017). Public Act No. 17-145. State of Connecticut. Available: <https://bit.ly/2NbTbJR>

<sup>40</sup> Pazinokas, Mark (2007). “Bail Reform Wins Final Passage in Senate.” *The CT Mirror*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2tmPSXk>

<sup>41</sup> Schrantz, Dennis, DeBor, Stephen, Mauer, Mark (2018). Decarceration strategies. Available: <https://bit.ly/2MhfDzr>

<sup>42</sup> This number is slightly different than the one stated in the introduction. The earlier statistic comes from the Connecticut State Department of Correction website. This discrepancy could be due to minor methodological differences in how statistics are collected or calculated, such as total population counts completed on different days of the year.

to 2018, crime rates dropped by 26% since 2008.<sup>43</sup>

With Connecticut's unique and robust history of reform, the challenge ahead is how to sustain the momentum for reform – and decarcerate even further.

State government has recognized this challenge. In a 2017 report,<sup>44</sup> the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) reported:

*Our expectation, today, is that the prison population will continue to decline over the coming year... due to the fact that the system, as a whole, is contracting. Virtually every measure from criminal arrests to discharges has tracked consistently lower over the past several years. Taken in sum, these factors suggest that the prison population, barring any major external developments, is heading down... the most pressing question is when will the population bottom out.*

What does it mean to “bottom out”? The incarcerated population in Connecticut at the end of 2018 was 13,378.<sup>45</sup> If Connecticut has the same *rate of incarceration* in 2019 as it did in 1970 – before the drug war was launched – the number of people in prison would be 3,920. That's a reduction of more than 70%.

While this may or may not be the right target to

“bottom out” the decline in decarceration in Connecticut, what's clear is that the next phase of decarceration in the state must go beyond the gains made thus far – perhaps much farther. Ending mass incarceration and the drug war will require reforms beyond what has been accomplished thus far. To achieve such results, we must build on the reform work of the last 20 years, ensure these efforts are inclusive of and led by community leadership and input of people impacted by the issues, and must aim to finally end, once and for all, the war on drugs and mass incarceration in the state.

How to proceed down this path is the subject of the rest of the Scan.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the Scan to accomplish the goals outlined above, we constructed a sophisticated research strategy that would cover a broad range of topics and processes while accounting for a fairly significant level of depth and multi-dimensionality. These topics included, but were not limited to:

- Identifying the primary and secondary issues groups and individuals are currently working on, as well as the principal obstacles that hinder their individual work and overall criminal justice reform in Connecticut

<sup>43</sup> Perkins, Julia (2018). “Connecticut's Prison Population Drops to Lowest Level in 24 Years.” *Newstimes*. Available: <https://bit.ly/2TTaXEp>

<sup>44</sup>Kuzyk, Ivan, Baudoin, Kyle, and Bobula, Kendall (2016). Connecticut's declining prison population: Some contributing factors. *Connecticut Office of Policy & Management*, and Connecticut state contact interviews via phone, October 2017. Available: <https://bit.ly/2EfmGg>

<sup>45</sup> Connecticut State Department of Correction Research Unit (2018). Average confined inmate population and legal status. Available: <https://bit.ly/2tpjAL4>

- Ascertaining criminal justice issues that are ripe for reform and those most in need of attention
- Attitudes and perceptions of the past, present, and future of criminal justice reform in Connecticut
- An assessment of how Connecticut compares to the rest of the United States regarding the fairness and impartiality of the justice system
- An evaluation of collaborative efforts and coalition-building over time, the respondent's calculus of value regarding past experiences with collaborations, and an assessment of the need and desire to form new partnerships in Connecticut
- An assessment of available resources for social justice organizations in Connecticut.

Working with a sociologist associated with Washington State University and Soros Justice Fellow Jarred Williams (Williams subsequently was appointed Director of Research at Katal), we designed a comprehensive, mixed-method research design, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, to best understand the broad range of topics we wanted to incorporate into the Scan. We also conducted a policy assessment and analysis reviewing primary and secondary source materials (i.e., reports, studies, legislation), organizational white papers, and more. But the heart of the research was input we solicited from colleagues in the field through surveys and semi-structured interviews.

### **3a. Survey Design**

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The Connecticut Criminal Justice Field Scan survey design was purposefully designed to cover a broad range of topics critical to the future of criminal justice reform in the state. Surveys provide a systematic method of data collection designed to measure attitudes, behaviors and beliefs. Surveys also provide an overview of opinions and access the familiarity of specified topic matters that are incredibly beneficial for determining trends and associations while providing a valuable tool to speak to the general state of mind of large populations. We designed and administered an 84-question anonymous survey that queried respondents about their knowledge and perceptions of the criminal justice issues in Connecticut.

The sampling frame consisted of a digital list nearly 500 reformers in Connecticut that that are invited to the monthly Statewide Connecticut Criminal Justice Reform Calls hosted by Katal. The survey was distributed to list members on September 20, 2018 via email with individual anonymous links included. The survey was also administered at various criminal justice reform conferences. During the survey data collection period, anonymous links were also distributed to capture more participants and for respondent convenience. Reminder emails were sent often during the period of the survey. The survey was closed and stopped accepting new responses on December 30, 2018.

In total, 112 respondents completed the survey. Surveys were collected and managed in Qualtrics,

a web-based survey platform, and analyzed according to accepted statistical methods and strictly adhered to the principles for ethical research.

### **3b. Semi-Structured Interview Design**

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The Connecticut Criminal Justice Field Scan research methodology also included qualitative interviews to give the quantitative survey data additional depth, context, and perspective. While surveys are incredibly valuable tools to understand general phenomenon, they focus almost entirely on “what” people think while obscuring the complicated processes and reasoning that led to those opinions.

To address this gap, the Katal research team incorporated qualitative interviewing into the mixed-methods research design utilized in the Connecticut Criminal Justice Field Scan. Qualitative research strategies are a flexible and powerful

tool to capture the voices of those on the front lines of criminal justice reform in Connecticut. Qualitative designs also capture the ways people make meaning of their lived experiences and provide a much more detailed and nuanced response than is possible with quantitative survey data.

The Katal research team reached out to over 50 people to ask for an interview to more completely understand how people are making sense of the criminal justice field and its future. We succeeded

in conducting 39 semi-structured interviews. Interviewees included people in philanthropy, advocacy, service programs, grassroots organizers, faith leaders, formerly incarcerated people, and government officials. Each interviewee was asked a standardized set of core questions. Follow-up questions were asked on an *ad hoc* basis and probed more thoroughly into their attitudes and perceptions of criminal justice reform in Connecticut (A complete list of interviewees can be found in Appendix A. Some of the people that were contacted for an interview never responded to our inquiries; a few declined to participate.)

The interviews averaged about an hour each and were recorded; interviewers took notes during the interview, and most interviews were subsequently professionally transcribed for analysis using Rev, an online transcription service. Interviews were maintained and analyzed using NVivo, a powerful software package for qualitative research. Data were coded according to the themes below using accepted qualitative techniques and research ethical principles and guidelines.<sup>46</sup>

Taken together, a comprehensive, rigid survey design and a flexible, semi-structured interview protocol provided a research strategy that would allow for gathering accurate and comprehensive data while ensuring the voices of reformers were centered in the project (see Appendix B for a detailed

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<sup>46</sup> When presenting the qualitative data, we quote interviewees extensively with very few edits. The only editing performed is to preserve confidentiality and for clarity. For clarity, some quotations were “cleaned up.” For example, consider the statement, “I think, um, that more resources, um, more resources should go to organizing.” In some cases, depending on context, this statement is presented as, “I think that more resources should go to organizing.” This is a common and widely accepted practice for presenting qualitative research.

description of the survey and semi-structured interview research methodology).

### **3c. Demographic Characteristics**

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The 112 completed surveys represent a wide variety of both individuals and the organizations that they represent (if affiliated). 71% of respondents are officially affiliated with an organization, while 23% are not. Regarding the organizations that survey respondents are associated with, the total yearly budgets ranged from self-funded (6.52%) to more than \$20 million (14.29%) per year, while the greatest percentage (15.22%) fell between \$250,000 and \$499,999. Most organizations represented in the survey work to affect change at the state-level (59.57%), while 23.40% focus on the local-level, and 14.89% have national interests (there was one international-focused organization). Nearly half of the sample indicated that advocacy is one of their three primary methods, followed by organizing and education (policy was fourth). For those that designated what year their organization was founded, the mean organizational age was 46.36 years.

The demographic characteristics of individual respondents were also diverse. 62.50% of respondents self-identified as women, 34.38% as men, 0% as Trans, and 3.13% as other. The reported educational attainment was skewed towards those with an advanced degree – 39.40% of respondents had earned a Master’s, Doctorate, or a professional degree. Nearly 16% of the sample identified as Latinx, while 48.39% identified as White, 32.26% as Black and 21.61% as Asian. Although 34% of survey respondents indicated that they are system-

impacted, 21% preferred not to answer this question. Of the 34% that are system-impacted, 14% are formerly incarcerated.

## **4. FINDINGS: EMERGENT THEMES**

During the course of the Connecticut Criminal Justice Field Scan, a number of common themes emerged after a meticulous examination of the interview and survey data. These themes ranged in topic from the necessity of a diverse source of funders in the criminal justice field to the lack of resources and attention given to formerly and currently incarcerated women. These themes give insight into what justice reformists, organizers, advocates, activists and formerly incarcerated people (FIP) care about in the state regarding criminal justice reform. They also serve a dual purpose in determining what potential steps people in the field are looking to take in 2019 and beyond.

### **Theme 1: The Necessity to Increase Funding for Community Organizing for Criminal Justice reform and Related Issues**

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Early during the Field Scan analysis, it became clear that a lack of adequate funding severely hindered individuals and organizations from working on various justice reform issues. When survey respondents were asked to name three main obstacles that most constrain their work in Connecticut, the number one answer selected was lack of funding (43.55%). Similarly, 66.13% of respondents noted that the lack of resources is one of the main

obstacles to lasting criminal justice reform in Connecticut (along with systemic racism and conservative political ideologies).

Interviewees provided a significant amount of depth and context to the quantitative data. Inadequate funding was repeatedly cited as the primary barrier for grassroots community organizing, which is required for lasting, systemic social change in Connecticut. One respondent discussed the existence of dichotomous hierarchy within the criminal justice reform space:

*“The problem with criminal justice reform is, historically, foundations have been moving money out of the work ... There’s a certain amount of groups that are the ‘haves’, and a certain amount of groups that are the ‘have nots’. And oftentimes the unfortunate part is that community based groups in Connecticut that do hard core organizing, agitation, are not getting on the good side of elected officials. They are also the same groups that have a hard time finding funding despite the fact that those groups are usually the most effective in turning heads and getting attention to the issue and pushing for aggressive reform.”*

This idea that organizing groups are the “have nots” in the criminal justice reform movement in Connecticut was a common theme throughout the interviews. The same respondent continued and made a passionate plea for grantmakers to prioritize community-based organizing:

*“What I would like to highlight is it is absolutely essential that particularly state-based and locally-based community foundations see the importance of funding organizing—local-community-based or regional-based organizing. When I look at the deficits that we have in the movement in Connecticut, I’m often pointing out like, “Oh, we don’t have any organizers.” Why is this community not present? We didn’t have any organizers.” So often when people are talking about, “Well that*

*piece of legislation didn’t go very far because nobody showed up” or you know, “That policy that got passed at that local municipality should not have been passed. How come nobody stood up and said something?” It’s because you’re not funding organizers.”*

It became abundantly clear that interviewees of all types and affiliations fundamentally agreed that community organizing is essential to structural social change. Representatives from grassroots groups, grassroots groups, grassroots groups, funding entities both large and small all agreed that organizing is vitally important to reform efforts in Connecticut. Another respondent summed up that importance with a simple example:

*“Civic engagement does not happen because people wake up one morning and say, ‘You know what I think I’m going to do? I think I’m going to get civically engaged.’ Civic engagement happens because there’s an organizer agitating the hell out of people saying, ‘Hey, wake up! What are you going to do about this?’ So, often when I hear funders or when I hear other folks in the movement or outside of the movement saying like, ‘Well, you know, the real problem here is we don’t, we’re just not really connected to our government.’ ...that’s because we’re not paying people to essentially catalyze and organize people to think about what is [their] role within government.”*

When asked about the appetite for funding grassroots organizations and community organizing, one grantmaker noted:

*“I think there is, but I’m not sure funders know what to do about it. But, I think we’re still developing the appetites of our board of trustees on how much we are going to invest in this stuff. And the big funders, the Silicon Valley folks, the Arnold Foundation, all of those guys, they have so much money to give away that they’re not going to give you \$10,000, \$25,000, \$50,000 grants to a million organizations. They’re going to be looking for the big groups or the big collaboratives that can handle bigger grants, you know, \$150 and \$250*

and \$500,000 grants.”

Many participants voiced this unwillingness to support smaller organizing-based groups. When pressed, another interviewee stated that until foundations prioritize grassroots organizing, the responsibility to fund these efforts falls to larger, better funded organizations currently operating in the field:

*“I think it means that organizations that are more well-funded need to take seriously their role in supporting locally-based organizing and ensuring that work continues because, ultimately, it impacts in a good way the work we’re trying to do for statewide reform. You need organizers, hard-core organizers, doing agitation to push deals. So, my whole thing is that the movement gets to a place where we, especially the larger organizations, see our role in assisting the community-based groups. That’s something I’m certainly on a daily basis trying to figure out.”*

Several foundation representatives were interviewed during the course of the Field Scan and shared critical insights that will provide guidance to grant seekers. One foundation representative provided some direction to grassroots organizations trying to acquire more resources:

*“The community foundations are the best place to go for these smaller entities, community direct service kinds of stuff, for starters. And then as they develop a track record and grow, maybe other funders would be interested in and supporting them. It’s also got to be individual fundraising or event fundraising.”*

Foundation grant application protocols were reported to be a significant barrier to grassroots organizations to submit competitive proposals. However, there seems to be a desire to simplify the administrative tasks required to get foundation funding:

*“I think it’s changing. I think more and more we’ve been advised as philanthropists to lessen the load on grantees to make our applications less burdensome. They [potential grantees] have budgets already prepared, not to make them reformat things and not ask for hours and hours and hours of work when we know the answers to a lot of it. So, there is an effort in philanthropy to try to be more of a partner and less burdensome.”*

One possible suggested solution to increase the pool of available funds for organizing is foundations collaborating to fund community organizations and projects. Fortunately, the grantmakers that were interviewed also recognized the need for a funding cooperative to increase the resources available to the field:

*“We were able to figure out ways to support it [an initiative] collectively, to have very important state-wide strategies...that no local foundation or family fund would have funded on their own. So, there are things that we can do as a funder collaborative that, alone, investing in it might be precarious, but, following each other and supporting each other, it actually can move the needle more so because we don’t have strong government support and some things, they need to get done. It does require the foundation sector to take up some of this work.”*

A collaborative funding strategy would be a solution to a well-known issue in the field – the reluctance of funders to support new and innovative reform ideas:

*“What we’re giving isn’t for new strategies for the most part, nor to have the greatest impact for the little money that we have and what we’re funding is emergency basic needs. And so, we’re just putting on emergency Band-Aid, but we’re not preventing the bleeding. And so, for us to do beyond that, we need more funds. We need more money. We need to, in my mind, what happened with [a pressing criminal justice issue] was there was a possibility of being able to obtain national dollars*

*and those national dollars made it easy for a table where all these funders could come together, get established because only together could we have gotten these national funds...And so, if we had an opportunity where a national funder would give matching dollars, you could see an impact in foundations being more strategic and uplifting policy and strategies from the ground up in a way that we really don't have the current capacity to do."*

Still respondents reported difficulties in supporting different types of reform work, even though there seems to have been many conversations with people in the field that were advocating for such a funding structure:

*"I'm sure a lot of people fund the same organizations, but it's not like we're going to pool our money... That's something that we've been asked many times to think more about, not just our foundation, but in general, philanthropy. It's really, really hard if folks are not looking to co-invest in a pooled way."*

Even if foundations are not yet prepared to pool money to support reform efforts, a strategic place to start would be to get more funders in the same room talking. At the very least, this would allow for grantmakers to have open lines of communication, as explained by one interviewee:

*"It doesn't always mean that foundations have to invest more money in an issue...just the mere fact of being able to sit around the table and strategize what are the current foundations supporting and how can we strategically align in a better way what we're currently supporting and what we hope to support and identifying what are some of the gaps, strategically speaking, that can continue moving the needle forward. And that has been amazing; it's been a great experience."*

The participants quoted here add new insight to a well-worn refrain: more can be done with more funds. However, it is not just more money, but

money being invested strategically and in unprecedented ways that is seen as the way forward. Specifically, participants argue, organizers are underfunded especially in relation to the importance of their work. Grantmakers may find the risk of these investments can be mitigated by collaboration between funding organizations.

The field in Connecticut seems to be heading toward more progressive funding strategies, but consciously focusing on how to cultivate this existing tendency should be seriously considered moving forward.

## **Theme 2: The Necessity of the Criminal Justice Field to Align with Other Fields**

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From the interviews and surveys, it also became clear that there needs to be an alignment between the criminal justice field and other issue fields. Less than one-quarter of organizations (22.45%) noted that they focused solely on criminal justice issues. For those organizations that were multi-purpose (77.55%), racial justice and mental health were the most common secondary issue (followed closely by youth justice and housing/homelessness, respectively). One respondent noted the intersectionality inherent in sustainable criminal justice reform:

*"I do think that equity is a general issue, is the issue that we need to be focusing on, and every decision that a family has to make in the lifespan of a family. And I think that's, in the very beginning of early childhood care to education to health to housing and jobs. The issue is really about community wellbeing."*

The interviewees put forth several ideas of where alignment with other fields could produce substantial benefits for both. A central issue that was discussed by nearly all the interviewees was the barriers to employment that justice involved people often face. Many expressed exasperation at how to effectively tackle this problem. One person posited that it needed to start with education:

*“I don’t know how tangible this is, but certainly changing the hearts and minds of employers and getting them to see that criminal justice policies in this state are impacting their ability to secure the talent that they need. I don’t know how you solve for that. Right? I don’t know what it takes.”*

One possible solution is bringing impacted people and business representatives together. The interviewee continued and shared an experience where a system-impacted person spoke at a conference with manufacturing representatives in attendance:

*“I was at a manufacturing conference and had a young man who was an offender and he spoke about that he’s working in manufacturing now and they were all very supportive and applauded him, but that’s maybe 25 manufacturers in a room or 50 manufacturers in the room and we certainly need there to be more, more of those opportunities for conversation. And quite frankly, I don’t know that there are other business groups that are willing to have those, those kinds of conversations.”*

Another interviewee noted that to create more opportunities for gainful employment for returning citizens, the support of labor unions is key:

*“When you’re on your way out in terms of reentry, what we’re talking about is barriers to occupational licensing. If we’re going to win that battle, that people aren’t being discriminated against in terms of employment... certainly we’re going to need labor unions on board.”*

The interviewee also explains that the long history of punitive criminal justice policies that have impacted individuals, families and communities are also bleeding into organized labor, creating the foundation for a partnership:

*“I think there are a number of labor organizations whose own members face barriers to employment or face barriers because of their criminal history, particularly the new labor movement in which you have new unions being creative in industries that historically did not have a union representation, like home healthcare workers as an example of a newly unionize field. Workers have, some of those workers have some interaction in one way or another with the justice system, whether that’s because they live in a community that’s system impacted, they have family that’s system-impacted or they themselves are. I think we’ve seen some of those more progressive labor unions, certainly we’ve seen that at the capital, taking initiative seeing that this issue impacts their members, too.”*

There was a common thread between interviewees that there needs to be a connection between the criminal justice field and the larger mental health, or behavioral health field:

*“I don’t have the language for it, but I think mental health—the lack of services around mental health, and the connection. And the connection in regards to what we should be doing to address criminal justice reform is important. I’m not sure if it’s happening in certain spaces, but I think that important for people to look at the lack of mental health [resources] in communities of color... I have a personal story of someone in my family who’s been struggling with mental health issues. And as soon as they began having these really visible challenges around mental health, was when he first started having heavy interactions with the police.”*

These sentiments from our interviews are also acknowledged in our survey results. When we

asked respondents what issue is not getting the attention it deserves, mental health was the number one answer. Mental health was the second most chosen response when asked what issues would they like to be working on but are not (women's issues was chosen the most). Mental health was also the third cited issue most important to ending mass incarceration (first was racial justice, second was school-to-prison pipeline).

Overall, these quotes and survey results show an interest in broadening the boundaries of criminal justice work. The importance for more traditional criminal justice reform is underscored from focusing on problems, such as employment, that disproportionately affect system-impacted people and in widespread issues such as the lack of "equity" and "community well-being." Only 22.45% of organization affiliated survey respondents reported that their organizations dealt solely with criminal justice issues. Further exploration of unique collaborations and coalitions is an important and ripe next step.

### **Theme 3: The Necessity for a Shared Table on Criminal Justice Reform**

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A third theme present in the Field Scan was the lack of shared space for individuals and organizations involved in the justice reform movement to come together. An entire section of our survey was dedicated to collaborations. Nearly 70% of survey takers are interested in forming new collaborations (only 4.84% reported that they are uninterested; 27.42% are undecided). While most respondents (91.22%) noted that there is at least

some collaboration in Connecticut, and that collaborative efforts have increased over time, increased forms of coalitions are still wanted. The vast percentage of respondents (57.58%) indicated that connecting state and local coalitions are the most needed (connecting local coalitions to each other was second with 16.67%). When asked about respondent fears to collaborations, most noted they have no fears and describe them as beneficial where work was distributed evenly.

Many interviewees in the criminal justice reform field, and from outside the field, expressed their desire for a "table" to share resources and updates. Some interviewees wanted to be a part of a coalition, one with shared goals for the larger field of justice reform to focus on building a movement. But, how is an effective collaboration envisioned? What structure should it have? Our respondents weighed in:

*"I think collaboration at the end of the day looks like showing up when it's time to show up. I think true collaboration looks like showing up in the worst of times, and working through that. I think true collaboration looks like showing up and working together in solidarity toward a common purpose. But, I think showing up on the ground, like when shit pops off, know what I mean? So, collaboration to me in that sense looks like people showing up and not just showing up to stand on the ground with you in protest, but showing up to help with what it takes to get justice and showing up at every level and staying in it for the long haul."*

According to the next interviewee, the purpose of collaborations is to create power through a shared purpose:

*"I think it's something we all, in this movement, talk talked about but shy away from describing. For me, aspirationally, rather than [talk about]*

*how collaborations work... What I would like a collaboration to be in this state is certainly a shared priority. I think we need to get to point where we collectively build power."*

The reality of social justice reform work is that, often, priorities differ. However, this should not prevent the desire to find common ground and communicate effectively:

*"What's missing is a large coalition of all those interest groups to sit at the table... and say 'okay, this is who we are. Here is what we're working on and what we're fighting for.'...The nature of this work has a history to it that people often forget. And so, when you get, for example, prison abolitionists in a room together with prison reformers, they don't always see eye to eye on everything. [But] the purpose of building a coalition is not to force people into commitments with each other. But it forces people into communication with each other."*

The above interviewee acknowledges the complexities of working in the criminal justice reform movement, and for this reason, wanted a space to share updates and goals with others working on similar issues. One interviewee pointed out that collaborations are much more than just speaking with each other – it's about crafting relationships:

*"I think there are opportunities for policy and practice change if you can develop relationships with people. That's one of the complaints I've heard sometimes in other advocacy efforts where it's all about the bull horn and the complaining and the rallying and... the table as opposed to developing relationships."*

A "relationship" suggests a shared history between people that has fashioned relatively static opinions and perceptions of each other and the nature of the connection. This collective history is coveted like currency and allocated cautiously – for it was born

out of sweat and struggle. Past and present relationships are also constantly shaping present interactions within social justice reform in Connecticut, as noted below:

*"So, the movement in Connecticut has certainly had things that have happened in the past that has caused leaders to be cautious in getting into coalition and partnerships with organizations. For new people entering the movement, whether it be new organizers, new policy folks or people coming out of state to do work here, I think that catches you off guard because you don't have a history of why someone feels a certain way about not working together. A lot of organizations feel that in one way or another. So, I think if anything it shows that, as a movement, there needs to be some energy focus placed on trust, building trust. I think that that would go a long way entering conversations believing that the person across the table from you believes also that they want to create a better state, a better justice system. I think that we need to do some kind of trust building work as a collective, as a collective."*

One interviewee presented a colorful analogy that demonstrates the infighting within the field that we've become accustomed to, but is tragically impeding efforts for unity to tackle the next phase of reform in Connecticut:

*"...it's sort of a mini version of a Cold War that's happening within Connecticut. Whose report's going to be prized? Whose work is going to be more prized? Whose relationship do you have? It's almost like Russia and the U.S. within the state of institutions who are basically gathering more resources, ramping up more publicity, and I actually think that's a disturbance and disingenuous to the work that needs to happen."*

Other concrete examples that were mentioned in other interviews included working groups shared amongst organizations, and the monthly Connecticut Statewide Criminal Justice Call, hosted by Katal. From all the interviews, there was a strong

sense that there needs to be, at minimum, a space for individuals and organizations to share their work:

*“An effective and viable collaboration to me looks like and feels like we're all on the same page with one voice. If there's something that's going on that's impacting the criminal justice field, there is a centralized place where all this information is stored. People should be inundated with information about different programs or happenings that are going on a regular basis, and not just finding out about this is happening tomorrow or this weekend, and you're just finding out two days before, a day before. There should be some kind of centralized repository of information so that everybody is keyed in to what is going on. And in some cases, that's not happening.”*

The amount of structure of a shared space varied widely with the interviewees. Some respondents wanted a collaborative leadership structure:

*“For me, true collaboration means that not one entity just sort of dictating and saying, “Okay, this is what needs to happen” and then bringing service providers or policy makers or whatever around the table to sort of solve that problem. I've always been struck by the fact that service providers will come to the table and talk about what they intend to do, but they rarely ever bring the consumer of those services with them.”*

It was also clear from the interviews that bucketing the structure of collaborations into centralized or decentralized oversimplifies the issue.

*“I would have to say centralized. Well, you know, no that's not true. I wouldn't say centralized, but I think that everybody's GPS has to be programmed to the same address, if that makes sense. So, there has to be an alignment around the objectives and the goals, but it doesn't necessarily have to be one entity that is the keeper of that plane.”*

Some had reservations about collaborations that center around a “table:”

*“I think [collaboration] has to be like project*

*based to be active. The reentry round tables I think are only so useful because they are really about service providers coming together to talk about resources that are available. It's not necessarily about getting work done together...actually engage in that kind of direct action together. But, I'm not a big fan of what a round table format that's reporting on work that's happening because I think it can take up a lot of time and resources and energy and not always produced active results. So, I'd like to see more collaborations that are more active and grassroots lead.”*

A shared table should include not only an eclectic mix of reform organizations and impacted individuals, but also funders:

*“No foundation should meet without the people who are doing the work in the room. [Funders] would have a greater incentive or empathy for a particular issue to move things forward. And so, getting the funders in the same room as the group, personal relationships get built, there's trust. It's not just a crazy idea on a piece of paper ... criminal justice reform is most likely not a personal experience of grantmakers.”*

Another respondent reiterated a similar sentiment:

*“I think we are very quick to think that the folks we're trying to help can't be part of the solution and can't provide input and insight into those solutions and I think that that's a critical error that's made. So, a true collaboration is making sure that the folks who are being served have a real seat and voice at the table.”*

While the survey data makes clear an affinity and a potential for collaboration, the interviews show just how complicated a process collaboration is. Including funders, system-impacted folks, organizers and organizations, and holding all groups accountable to action is thought, by participants, to be key to lasting collaborations.

## Theme 4: The Necessity to Better Integrate Directly Impacted People Into the Criminal Justice Reform Field in Meaningful Way

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Though many formerly incarcerated people have joined in the field of criminal justice reform following incarceration (and many are working even from within prisons to make change), the interviews exposed that there is still a gap in the ways in which formerly incarcerated people (FIP) can meaningfully contribute. Many respondents who are FIP expressed that they were not involved in the larger field of justice reform, either because they were limited because of their work schedules, or because they are not able to contribute outside of sharing their story of being incarcerated. Our respondents expressed varied sentiments on how the reform space is utilizing directly impacted people:

*“So, if we don't galvanize this [formerly incarcerated] population and get more people involved and make them understand how they can advocate for themselves, the movement is going to be in trouble...We need to galvanize this population so that they can become involved. We should have individuals that are formerly incarcerated with their own political PAC. I firmly believe that. And we should have these individuals face to face, with all of their either councilmen, councilwomen, or alderman or alderwoman. And their state representatives. And their Washington representatives.”*

In the excerpt below, a formerly incarcerated person who was previously involved in the justice field as a community organizer shares their experiences of no longer being in the field, given the constraints of his work:

*“I'm not as active [in the criminal justice reform field] as I want to be. I would say, [laughs] you know I'm really not that active because I work too*

*much.”*

The interviewee explains that they are working three jobs across the state in order to survive. After being incarcerated a second time, work and educational opportunities were limited, and they were relegated to three minimum wage jobs. Because of the laws surrounding incarceration and employment, is often hard for formerly incarcerated to not only get, but also maintain, a job that pays a living wage. Addressing this gap will likely require additional funding to meaningfully support the integration of formerly incarcerated people into the field.

However, some interviewees noted that employment for directly impacted people is becoming more prolific:

*“I think you're starting to see more people trying to do, with the capacity that they have, the kind of people-centric, impacted person based work. I think you see that. You certainly are seeing that at the national level and a local level and I think especially it's in the criminal justice reform movement there being a lot of organizations hire folks that are [directly impacted]. You take on staff positions within nonprofits across the country. And so that's certainly a need, something that's contributing to that change. But in terms of more people having opportunities to shape the work, I do think that that trend is happening, at least in what I'm seeing as someone in Connecticut with what we're trying to do and within the larger field.”*

Other respondents were impatient with the progress made to better integrate directly impacted people into the reform space due to a lack of available resources and funding priorities:

*“I think the criminal justice field could do a whole hell of a lot better. I mean it's just unfortunate that*

*often, it's a top down situation where individuals that have not necessarily been impacted directly by the justice system are at the table trying to come up with solutions for individuals that have been impacted by the justice system."*

One interviewee touched on a sensitive topic that is often only whispered about in the criminal justice reform movement – tokenizing. This issue is vitally important to the future of the field as we move to more fully incorporate system-impacted people into the reform space. An interviewee provided critical and thoughtful insight and their response is presented in its entirety:

*"There's another conversation about what's the difference between tokenizing people and giving people real positions with real power. I think tokenizing, and I should say I don't think people are going like, "We need to do that and hire." People who come from a place that they're trying to be intentional about their goal of recentering the work. But, if those positions are only about people telling their story, there's not a lot of power in that, right? You're just taking someone's trauma and kind of using that to advance an issue without that person having an actual say in the strategy and the resources that are attached to that strategy. How it will be implemented? So, when we talk about being in positions of power within a nonprofit organization, what we're actually talking about is who's making the budget? Who's deciding where the money in the budget, that bucket of money that we have to do criminal justice work, who will get to decide where that money is going to within the organization? Now, it won't always be the case that someone who was formerly incarcerated or justice impacted will be the very specific person that's deciding where the money goes. But, the way you do the work of not tokenizing is they certainly have a significant say in how that money is used. I am focusing on the money because when I'm talking about money, what I really mean is resources to hire organizers or resources to create a communications campaign. That's taking into account how we're doing the work and in a way that's supposed to be effective, but also reaches communities that are im-*

*pacted by these issues. So, I think that the difference between those two things are, one is hiring someone to be a leader, like a movement leader, which also is meaningful. I don't want to come off like it's not meaningful. There's certainly a place for thought leaders who travel the state and travel the country to talk about the need for criminal justice reform. I don't see that as a tokenizing thing. I see the need for that. But, I also see a need for hiring people to do the work, which is essentially the scaffold on which the people who stand out as movement leaders, they're on a stage. But, there are a bunch of people underneath that stage that are making that opportunity happen. For nonprofits, we need to take seriously who's building that stage and, in my view, people who are impacted should also be building the stage and not just be put on the stage."*

Much like the theme of collaboration, the importance of inclusiveness is much easier agreed to than enacted. The reality of making the space more inclusive of FIP means taking a hard look at the specific issues faced by this group – which the space is uniquely positioned to excel at – and considering what real incorporation with real power looks like.

## **Theme 5: The Necessity to Give Better Resources and Attention to Formerly and Currently Incarcerated Women**

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The last overwhelming theme that came up in the interviews was the lack of resources and attention given to formerly incarcerated and currently incarcerated women. Connecticut has one facility for women, York Correctional Institute, which serves as both a jail and a prison. Excerpts from interviews below describe the treatment that women receive while they're incarcerated:

*"I don't see any changes [in the criminal justice field]. It's actually getting worse for the women.*

*There isn't a lot of programming [at York CI]. They [used to] offer a lot of programming, now it's gone. Many women who are sentenced are stipulated to complete a lot of programs, then when you get to the women's prison, they don't have it... Then you're stuck doing the majority of your time... It's put on your OAP (Offender Accountability Program) that you have to complete that, and they don't have it in our prisons... and if you're offered parole and you haven't taken that program, chances are you aren't getting parole."*

*"You could be sick in there and they'd give you Motrin. This one woman, [name redacted], they gave Motrin to her for months. Finally, they took her to UConn Health and she had Stage 4 Lung Cancer."*

*"One thing that should be worked on is the women's facility. They're getting so restrictive. It's crazy. There's no movement. The women are getting treated so poorly. It's getting worse... if they sleep the wrong way, they get locked down. If they look at a CO (Correctional Officer) the wrong way, they get locked down... they get treated very poorly. They get disrespected. They abuse women. They treat women very poorly. They don't care about their health."*

*"We need to talk about the verbal abuse on women. Half of those officers wouldn't do what they do if they were in a men's facility. Absolutely not. They wouldn't do it... [I've seen first-hand] how the men are treated versus how us women are treated and it's a big difference. Even when they're restraining the women, it's like they're restraining a man. It's really sad. Things that people don't talk about. And that's crazy."*

*"You leave there more traumatized than when you went in because of how they treat you."*

These quotes highlight the necessity for the criminal justice reform movement in Connecticut to look at the ways in which women are being harmed by the system while they are incarcerated. Even following incarceration, interviewees talked about the prevalence of resources for men over the resources for women:

*"There's a lot more things for men in the community than women, which is one of the reasons why [I specifically work with formerly incarcerated women]."*

*"Most jobs that we can get, because we have a record, is minimum wage. And as an adult, most of us parents—you can't raise a family on minimum wage. Not being able to do things with our kids, things that would keep them out of the system. We can't give our kids karate lessons to keep them busy, or ballet. We can't do things like other kids have. It starts the cycle again."*

It is clear that in Connecticut, the criminal justice reform movement needs to take action in caring for women, both while they are incarcerated and following incarceration. Interviewees of the Field Scan have spoken:

*"We need to be treated like the equivalent [of men]... my main goal is getting the abuse [of incarcerated women] to stop."*

## 5. KEY FINDINGS

In addition to the five Emergent Themes, a number of key findings were identified in the Scan.

### ***Many Pressing Issues***

The survey provided a wealth of information about the attitudes, opinions and perceptions regarding criminal justice reform organizations and individuals in Connecticut. When asked respondents to select all the issues they were working on, the number one answer was racial justice (10.82%), followed by re-entry (9.38%), and school-to-prison pipeline (6.73%). We subsequently asked respondents to identify their primary issue and 17.86% indicated racial justice, while 15.48% and 11.9% designated re-entry and mental health, respectively. Nearly 50% of the

sample noted that they spend at least one-quarter of their time working on social justice issues other than their primary focus.

Reformers in Connecticut are interested in working on a wide variety of issues other than their primary focus. When asked what issue respondents were interested in, but not currently working on, the top five answers were within 3% points of each other – women’s issues, mental health, police accountability, closing jails and prisons, and sentencing reform. A limited amount of time (45.07%) was selected as the main reason for not working these issues, followed by not enough funding and limited capacity (both chosen by 21.13% of respondents).

### ***Prospects for Reform***

A substantial part of this project was dedicated to reform efforts. When we asked respondents to write-in what single criminal justice issue is most ready for reform, the number one answer was marijuana decriminalization/legalization. Bail reform was a close second, followed by sentencing reform and re-entry, which were tied for third. Conversely, when asked what issue wasn’t getting the attention it needs, mental health was first, followed by youth justice, and bail reform.

There is much debate within the reform space about what issue is most important to ending mass incarceration. The survey results do not settle this important issue. The most selected answer was school-to-prison pipeline (9.86%) followed by racial justice (9.15%), mental health (8.45%), and sentencing reform (8.10%). Surprisingly, nearly

40% *would not* categorize the work they are currently doing as an effort to end mass incarceration.

### ***Optimism vs. Pessimism***

An analysis of the views of respondents regarding criminal justice reform in Connecticut produced mixed results. The vast majority of survey respondents (63.94%) are either somewhat or very optimistic about the future of criminal justice reform in Connecticut. However, there are notable gender differences. More than 38% of men report feeling not very or not at all optimistic about the future of reform in Connecticut, while only 7.5% of women report the same. When responses are disaggregated by race and ethnicity, we found that 20% of Latinx and 31.58% of Black respondents report unoptimistic views of the future, compared to only 10% of white respondents. One interviewee expounded on their pessimism – a sobering viewpoint that most certainly everyone doing this work has experienced at some point:

*“Part of me, sometimes, I do feel hopeless. It’s [mass incarceration] been going on for so, so, so long but all it’s doing is transforming into other things and just looking different. Sometimes I feel hopeless because this has been going on since this country was founded. So, when you look at it there’s been a lot of progress, but after years and years there’s still so much that has to be done. I’m not saying we should give up, absolutely not. What I am saying is how important is it [reform efforts] to the criminal justice system? Is it more important than working on each other and working on ourselves and dealing within? I don’t think so. Maybe years ago, I would have said yes, but at this point I don’t think so.”*

## ***Connecticut is a Progressive Leader...Sort of...***

When compared to other states, the majority of respondents (58.06%) considered Connecticut a progressive state. Again, there were gender differences. While only 17.5% of women disagreed that Connecticut was progressive, over 40% of men disagreed. There were also notable racial differences. While 83% of white respondents considered Connecticut progressive, only 35% of Black respondents agreed (40% of Latinx respondents considered Connecticut progressive). Generally, respondents, regardless of race, ethnicity or gender, disagreed that Connecticut has lenient criminal justice policies.

There was also some disagreement whether criminal justice reform in Connecticut serves as a good model for other states to follow. While 40.68% of respondents thought it was a good model, this aggregated total hides racial differences. Greater than 60% of white respondents agreed Connecticut provided a good model, while only 21.05% of Black respondents agreed.

Race, ethnicity and gender inequality have always been sources of tension in Connecticut. According to the results of the survey, there is still much work to be done. Over 80% of respondents at least somewhat disagree that the criminal justice system in Connecticut treats all races and ethnicities the same. While, 20% of white residents believe there is race and ethnicity equality in the Connecticut criminal justice system, only 5% of Black residents do. Furthermore, 59.68% of respondents cited the systemic racism within Connecticut (the

number one answer) when asked about the main obstacles to lasting criminal justice reform in the state.

The same can be said for whether Connecticut treats all genders equally. More than half of all respondents (54.10%) indicated that there are gender differences in how criminal justice is implemented in Connecticut. While 28.57% of women believe that there is gender bias, only 12.50% of men do.

## **Legislative Priorities**

The Connecticut Scan revealed that there is very little agreement on what should be the main reform focus for the 2019 legislative session and beyond. Our survey found that among respondents, many believed bail reform was one of the issues that was most ready for reform. However, only two interview respondents stated that bail should be a priority for 2019. The rest of the interview responses spanned the gamut of criminal justice issues that should be prioritized this year: Police accountability, probation and parole reform, prosecutorial misconduct all were noted. This reinforces the need for a shared space to coordinate reform efforts, while underscoring that there is not likely one issue or group that can or should become the main focus of activity or leadership.

However, one respondent articulated a rather interesting reform idea coupled with a plea for mindfulness as the field continues advocating for individual legislative priorities:

*“One of the reforms that I'd love to see in the leg-*

*islature is actually a reform of the legislature itself. There's this constant belief that if you pass something, it'll change something and I don't think they've taken a good look, a hard look at what they've done and how it's impacted things and I would love for them to be simply more mindful about what they're trying to achieve. Some of that requires a shift in terms of seeing a win as passing a law versus seeing a win as ensuring its effective implementation. There's always a rush to do something new. What I would love to see is for those reformers sit back and say, "What have we done? Where is it?" Let's focus our efforts on that because you never know what you're going to get through a new administration, but you can take a look at what you've done, what's on the books, how is it administered, and really get on the same page in terms of what you want. Because again, I think it could be done in a very bipartisan fashion."*

The interviewee continues with an example of a past reform victory and how unintended consequences can transpire. This reform, Ban the Box, was the most cited by the interview pool as an illustration of recent successful legislative accomplishments:

*"One of those examples is Ban the Box. Everybody was rushing to Ban the Box and in theory it makes a lot of sense. But I think what should be done is to take a look at what has been the effect of that. From a few studies that I've seen, what's happened is actually people take their implicit bias towards folks that they perceive to be in the justice system, you know, normally black and brown people and then use that to color their decision-making process in the beginning. So, they don't necessarily need to see a criminal background. They'll just estimate that because this person's applying and they're this race or ethnicity that they'll most likely have one. So, then they therefore won't get a call back. So, the discrimination occurs before they actually even see the record, and even more disproportionately so."*

This participant reminds us all that passing legislation alone is not enough to ensure lasting, meaningful change. Implementation of legislation as

well as the culture that led to biased policies in the first place both need due consideration. With the lack of any one decisive issue on the reform agenda it might be useful to begin by interrogating recent victories and conducting assessments of the practical consequences of these reforms. Connecticut's rich history of criminal justice reform needs to serve as an anchor for future sustained progress.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scan holds deep insights for reformers, organizers, legislators, and funders. Participants identified the following needs as priorities moving forward:

- The need for more funding for community organizing
- The need to collaborate between fields
- The need for a shared table on criminal justice reform
- The need to better integrate directly impacted persons
- A continued need to better address problems specific to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women

These are priorities that can and should shape how the field approaches specific criminal justice issues.

In addition to these five Emergent Themes, Katal has identified the following additional recommendations which we believe are immediately actionable. These recommendations do not represent everything Connecticut must do to end mass incarceration and the drug war; rather, emerging from a

synthesis of the interviews and surveys, they are included here as action steps to keep momentum going and strengthen the field.

### **The Field:**

***Create a table to share resources, develop active collaborations, and build relationships.*** The vast majority of survey respondents (97.42%) reported being interested in creating new collaborative structures. Of those, nearly, 60% indicated that a table connecting state and local coalitions would be most valuable. A shared table created specifically to focus and solidify a shared vision for a more equitable and just Connecticut must allow for opposing ideologies. This shared table is envisioned as a space for those who identify as doing criminal justice reform as their primary goal. This includes not only the advocacy core, but also an eclectic mix of stakeholders.

The table must be about much more than just resource acquisition. This table is not about information sharing – it’s about collectively creating a formidable foundation upon which the future of criminal justice in Connecticut can be constructed.

***Expand the scope the Connecticut Statewide Criminal Justice Calls.*** While the table proposed above is targeted at the advocacy and organizing core of criminal justice reform in Connecticut, there is also a need to communicate and share criminal justice information across other fields of work in a more direct way that solicits their reactions to criminal justice reforms. Katal has been hosting monthly calls with reformers in Connecticut since 2018. The goals of the calls are:

- *Share and Highlight* issues, campaigns, and projects that groups are working on to advance statewide reform;
- *Identify* ways to align, coordinate, and support each other in the work to end mass incarceration;
- *Strengthen* organizing and advocacy across issues and build movement in Connecticut.

As the calls are not focused around strategy or a specific issue, they afford space to talk about the wide range of reform efforts at the capitol.

These calls should continue to provide this space, being sure to highlight the intersections between criminal justice and other sectors such as healthcare, education, employment, housing, and more.

### **Legislative Actions:**

***Purposefully and critically evaluate previously implemented criminal justice reform policies.*** Connecticut has seen many changes with regard to criminal justice policies in the last 20 years. Critically reflecting on these policies can be a meaningful place to start the next phase of criminal justice reform in Connecticut. The field needs to ask: Are these policies being implemented in ways that achieve their intended purpose? What can be done to build upon these victories?

Toward this end, we recommend convening a working group to

- analyze and review the consequences of recent legislation – did this legislation achieve its aims?
- explore if existing reforms can be built up; that is, can existing reforms be taken even further through administrative action?

Reformers celebrate the successful passage of new or improved criminal justice reform policies – as they should – and then often pivot quickly to the next policy priority. Funders and reform organizations should take a step back and critically evaluate the consequences of past reform efforts. Has reform worked as intended? What can be done to build upon previous reforms? Is legislative reform the only avenue to achieve decarceration? These evaluations will likely suggest opportunities for further reforms that will be comparatively easy to implement as they build on already successful campaigns. Engaging with past victories is a way to capitalize on the low-hanging fruit for reform ensuring continued victories and providing a common agenda. The Legislature may benefit from convening a Commission to produce a report modeled on the 1997 Law Revision Commission report which provided a roadmap for drug policy reform in Connecticut. A similar “roadmap”, accounting for the last 20 years of reform, may help lawmakers think through the next 20 years.

**Eliminate Cash Bail.** Despite the lack of a common agenda among groups, there are a number of cross-cutting reform issues that can be seen as universally important and timely. The full elimination of cash bail in Connecticut remains an important

goal. Evidence from previous campaigns and political support suggest that this issue is well timed for reform.

**Legalize Cannabis.** Cannabis should be legalized, taxed, and regulated for adult use. It is time to stop the ineffective, racially biased, and unjust enforcement of marijuana prohibition and to create a new, well-regulated, and inclusive marijuana industry that is rooted in racial and economic justice. In Connecticut, responsible must also account for and seek to repair the harm that’s been caused by a nearly century of racially biased prohibition,

**Decriminalize personal possession and low-level sales of all drugs.** The decriminalization of all drugs for personal use and low-level sales is an ambitious, but achievable, continuation of the trend toward sensible drug policy reform in the state of Connecticut. Continued decarceration in the state will require decriminalization. Countries like Portugal and the Czech Republic have led the way on decriminalization and provide powerful examples of how to proceed.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study provides an overview of the state of criminal justice reform in Connecticut and how to strengthen and focus efforts moving forward.

The universal nature of the needs identified here are important especially given the diversity of issues that criminal justice groups are grappling with. This scan revealed that there is no consensus on any single issue as especially ripe for reform.

Rather, there are a number of pressing issues that groups are working on.

We focus our recommendations on addressing these stated needs and suggesting a field-wide review of recent progress as a universally helpful endeavor for this diverse space.

As we predicted, the survey instrument and corresponding semi-structured interview protocol produced a vast amount of data that can be mined for a variety of purposes beyond this project to better inform and strengthen the criminal justice reform

field in Connecticut. Additionally, the survey provided a foundation of knowledge from which to work.

We are grateful to all the respondents who took time to be interviewed; to those who filled out the survey; and to those who talked with us in informal discussions about the movement to end mass incarceration in Connecticut. Finally, we recognize and thank the Tow Foundation for its support for this project.

## Appendix A: Interview Participants

First	Last	Organization
1. Alicia	Alamo	InterCommunity/Transitions Clinic
2. Tracie	Bernardi	ACLU-CT Smart Justice
3. Earl	Bloodworth	New Haven Reentry Roundtable
4. Alison	Bloomquist	Chief Public Defender's Office
5. Victoria	Christgau	Connecticut Center for Non-Violence
6. Thomas "TJ"	Clarke	Member, Hartford City Council
7. Andrew	Clark	Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP), Central Connecticut State University
8. Andrea	Comer	Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA)
9. Danielle	Cooper	Assistant Professor in Criminal Justice & Director of Research of Tow Youth Justice Institute, University of New Haven
10. Dmitri	D'Alessandro	Middletown Art Academy, Middletown
11. Brett	Davidson	Connecticut Bail Fund
12. Ayishea	Denson	Manager of Community Development, City of New Haven
13. Kerry	Ellington	New Haven Legal Assistance
14. Scot	Esdaile	NAACP (President State Conference)
15. Barbara	Fair	New Haven-based activist
16. Taylor	Ford	FAVOR, Inc.
17. Jeff	Grant	Family Reentry
18. Susan	Gunderman	CT Reentry Roundtable/Hartford Reentry Center
19. Joshua	Hall	CT State Representative (D-Hartford )
20. Warren	Hardy	HYPE (Helping Young People Evolve) – Hartford
21. LaReese	Harvey	Community activist
22. Aliyah	Henry	University of Connecticut School of Social Work, Students Against Mass Incarceration Chair
23. Rob	Hebert	Career Resources
24. Howard	Hill	Howard K Hill Funeral Home
25. Beth	Hines	Community Partners in Action
26. Mike	Lawlor	Undersecretary for Criminal Justice for Governor Dannel Malloy
27. Ivan	Kuzyk	CT Statistical Analysis Center
28. Sherry	Manetta	Community Partners in Action
29. Brandon	McGee	CT State Representative (D-Hartford &

		Windsor)
30. Daryl	McGraw	Soft Landings/Formerly INC
31. Melvin	Medina	ACLU-CT
32. Caprice	Mendez	Community Foundation of Greater New Haven
33. Cindy	Prizio	One Standard of Justice
34. Louis	Reed	#cut50
35. Camelle	Scott-Mujahid	CT CORE-Organize Now
36. Diane	Sierpina	Tow Foundation
37. Alex	Taubes	Rikers Debate Program – Yale University
38. Fahd	Vahidy	William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund
39. DaJuan	Wiggins	Community activist, New Britain

## Appendix B: Detailed Research Methodology & Limitations

### **Survey Design**

After finalizing the broad content of themes, we started to develop the questionnaire. This is a multipart process that started with designing a comprehensive group of tangible questions for each of the central themes. To collect the maximum quantity of data and achieve the greatest amount of specificity, we incorporated a broad range of question types into the survey, including:

- Close-ended questions
  - Multiple choice questions
    - Dichotomous response
    - Polytomous response
  - Numerical rating scales
    - Ipsative scale
    - Slider scale
    - Rating scale
    - Likert Scale
  - Matrix tables
    - Radio grid
- Open-ended questions
  - Short response
  - Essay response
- Demographic questions

There are a tremendous number of design elements to consider when crafting a high-quality survey. The number of questions per page, page transition style, background design, font type, color and size all contribute greatly to the *look and feel* of the survey. Taking care to cluster thematically related questions ensues a fluid survey flow. The combination of design elements greatly influences research design validity.

We then obtained thoughtful and critical

feedback from a small group of potential respondents to determine the relevance, clarity, and comprehension of the initial cluster of potential survey questions.

Armed with the potential final questionnaire, the next step was pretesting the survey instrument for a host of potential issues, including effectiveness, question variation and order effects, meaning, and respondent interest and attention. We implemented a multipart pretest design that included expert evaluation, participating pretest, and undeclared pretest methodologies.

- Expert evaluation – The survey instrument was evaluated by experts in survey design, survey analysis, Connecticut criminal justice reform, and by directly impacted individuals to assess survey question design, survey feel and flow, survey content, and understandability.
- Participating pretest – We asked a select sample of respondents to complete the survey and react in real time to question form, wording and order.
- Undeclared pretest – This method involves not disclosing to respondents that we were conducting a pretest evaluation. This real-world setting allows for an analysis of survey completion time, standardization, influential questions, etc.

The comments, critiques, and recommendations from the pretest participants were carefully evaluated and were incorporated into the final survey instrument where deemed appropriate.

## ***Semi-Structure Interview Design***

A semi-structured interview approach was chosen out of the larger qualitative framework. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate here because they provide a balance between a “guided” and “open” interview process. Interviewers were given an interview guide with a set of questions and themes that should be covered in the interview. Having this set guide ensures that the same general topic areas are covered. The guide is there for the purposes of an aide-mémoire – something to help the interviewer confirm that all relevant themes have been addressed.

However, the interview is open enough that it can flow naturally allowing interview participants some leeway to address themes not explicitly in the interview guide and making it possible for participants to make their own connections between the themes. Exploring topics not covered in the interview guide is encouraged and necessary to conduct high quality and informative interviews.

The initial themes included on the interview guide were suggested by individuals familiar with the criminal justice reform space in Connecticut in collaboration with research specialists. The interview guide in its final form is the result of pretesting with key informants.

## ***Limitations***

All research is susceptible to limitations, and this project was as well. First, we wanted to speak not just with organizations and professional criminal justice reform advocates in the field, but also average citizens that happen to be interested in a more just Connecticut. Due to the near impossible task of compiling an all-inclusive list that included all the people we wanted to participate in the project, a convenience sampling method was utilized. While this method allowed us include data from people that would have otherwise been excluded, our research results are not representative of the entire population of reformers in Connecticut.

Another limitation is the number of responses we received. 112 responses are not enough to adequately disaggregate into gender and race specific results. Hence, when this is presented in the report, it is done just as an informative exercise and is not meant to imply statistical significance.

One of the comments we received from our pretest respondents indicated that the survey may be too long, thus causing survey fatigue. We wrestled with this observation because the goal was to obtain as much comprehensive information as possible. However, survey fatigue is an important factor that must be considered when designing a survey.

In the end, we labored to eliminate many questions entirely and used the most efficient language possible in the questions retained, thereby reducing the length of the final questionnaire substantially.

The qualitative statements presented by research participants are their perceptions and opinions. We do not present them as facts, but more as trends of public perceptions regarding the specific topic matter under investigation

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol - Connecticut Criminal Justice Reform Field Scan

Included here is the Interview Protocol we used for the Field Scan.

Due to space limitations, we did not include the full Survey. If you would like a copy of the full survey, please email Jarred Williams, Director of Research: [jarred@Katalcenter.org](mailto:jarred@Katalcenter.org).

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### Background and Connecticut Reforms:

1. How did you come to be involved in the criminal justice reform movement?

Probes: When was that? How has that influenced your work? How has your work evolved since that moment?

2. What has been the most significant change in the field in the past 20 years?

Probes: Have there been any other significant changes? Does it feel like the movement is growing?

3. What is your involvement like today?

Probes: What is your position? What organization are you associated with? Are you associated with more than one organization?

4. What have been some of the accomplishments you've seen in Connecticut in the last few years?

5. What have been some of the defeats or setbacks?

6. In your opinion, what are the two or three biggest obstacles to ending mass incarceration in Connecticut?

a. Probes: How about nationally?

7. What is one issue related to justice reform you think everyone should be talking about?

a. Probes: What is the best way to address that reform? What needs to happen next to advance the cause of justice?

8. What is the most unique approach to criminal justice you've seen in Connecticut or elsewhere?

Probes: Are things like that becoming more common?

9. We've all seen how new connections are being made between criminal justice reform and other issues – like education, when talking about the school to prison pipeline, or voting, with voter disenfranchisement issues. Are you seeing more connections like that being made?

a. Probe: Are there other connections you think that should be made? Do those seem like viable connections at this point in time?

10. In addition to your own group, are there any criminal justice reform groups you think are doing particularly good work? If so, who, and what do you think they're doing right?

**If we could turn to talking shop for a moment:**

11. We hear a lot of talk about collaborations and networks in the criminal justice movement? What does that mean to you? Do you find the idea useful? Valuable? What would a viable collaboration look like to you?
  - a. What have you found most useful in collaborations?
  - b. What are your biggest concerns for collaborating with another organization?
  - c. Do you think a centralized or de-centralized (give examples of each) approach would be best?
  - d. How formal?
12. Do you have any organizational partners? To put differently, who do you work with most often? What does that look like for you in a day? How are they structured?
13. Is your group part of any *local or statewide* networks or coalitions working for reform? If so, what are they?

Probes:

IF YES: What does it do? How is it structured? What do you contribute? Do you find it valuable? How so?

IF NO: Are you aware of any? Does the idea of a local or statewide network appeal to you?

14. Are you part of any local, *regional, or national* networks working on criminal justice reform?

Probes:

IF YES: What does it do? How is it structured? What do you contribute? Do you find it valuable? How so?

IF NO: Are you aware of any? Does the idea of a regional or national network appeal to you?

**I have a few big picture questions to wrap up:**

15. What would strengthen your ability to be effective in doing criminal justice reform work in Connecticut?
16. This might sound like a similar question, but considering not just your own organization but the larger movement for justice, what's one thing that would strengthen the movement to end mass incarceration?

17. What's one challenge or obstacle you face to advancing your agenda?
18. Is there one issue you think everyone should be working on/confronting in the effort to end mass incarceration in Connecticut? How about nationally?
19. The 2019 legislative session is coming up and there's going to be a new governor and legislature. What's the top two or three policy reforms you think should be prioritized in the 2019 legislative session?
20. Where do you see the criminal justice movement in Connecticut going?
21. Is there anything else you'd like me to know?