

RES 18-041

Wilmington, Delaware
May 17, 2018

#4535

Sponsor:

Council
Member
Dixon

Co-Sponsors:

Council
President
Shabazz

Council
Member
Oliver

WHEREAS, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was constructed to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the ACLU's Campaign for Smart Justice represents a nationwide campaign effort committed to redesigning the criminal justice system – one that is substantially smaller, centered on restorative justice practices and helps people make a successful transition back to mainstream society. Today, the United States makes up about 5 percent of the world's population and has 21 percent of the world's prisoners; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, African Americans represented 12 percent of the U.S. adult population but 33 percent of the sentenced prison population. These disproportionate outcomes are attributable to "tough on crime" policies and legislation enacted by policymakers in the 1980s. From 1980 to 2007 about one in three of the 25.4 million adults arrested for drugs was African American. Mandatory minimums and three-strikes sentencing laws have resulted in unnecessarily harsh and disproportionately devastating racial disparities within our criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, according to the Sentencing Project, despite African American juveniles accounting for only 16 percent of the youth population, 37 percent of their cases are moved to criminal court and 58 percent of African American youth are sent to adult prisons. Harsh school punishments, from suspensions to arrests, have led to high numbers of youth of color encountering the juvenile-justice system at an earlier age; and

WHEREAS, of April 2018, there are a total of 1,074 sentenced inmates and 544 detentioners being held at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution. African Americans account for 67 percent of the correctional population, where nearly half of the population is between the ages of 19 and 30. Based on analysis performed by the Delaware Criminal Justice Council, about 75 percent of offenders were rearrested for a serious offense within 3 years of their release, and the average term for those sentenced to more than one year was 742 days.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, that Council supports the bipartisan effort of the ACLU's Campaign for Smart Justice by recognizing the obstacles faced by previously incarcerated individuals and its negative impact on individuals, the community, and the City of Wilmington.

Passed by City Council,
May 17, 2018

Attest: Maribel Seijo
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution offers support toward the ACLU's Campaign for Smart Justice – a multiyear effort to reduce the U.S. jail and prison population by 50%, combat racial disparities in the criminal justice system by challenging the injustices that have helped make America the world's largest incarcerator.