Introduction to Policy & Advocacy Work at CGLA

Why People Come to CGLA

They're facing barriers to employment, housing or education because of past arrest or conviction

They're at risk of losing their job, housing or other life pursuits due to arrest or conviction.

The connection with their children could be or has been lost due to detention or incarceration

They need help navigating the legal system, fighting an injustice, seeking freedom, battling re-incarceration, desiring what every person deserves in life

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We will continue to fight for justice for every person that walks through our doors, but we will not let their experiences be in vein.

CGLA's Policy & Advocacy work focuses on bringing about systemic justice, driven by the leadership of those directly impacted.

People who once felt powerless become agents of change; once you see an injustice, you are motivated to change that very system.

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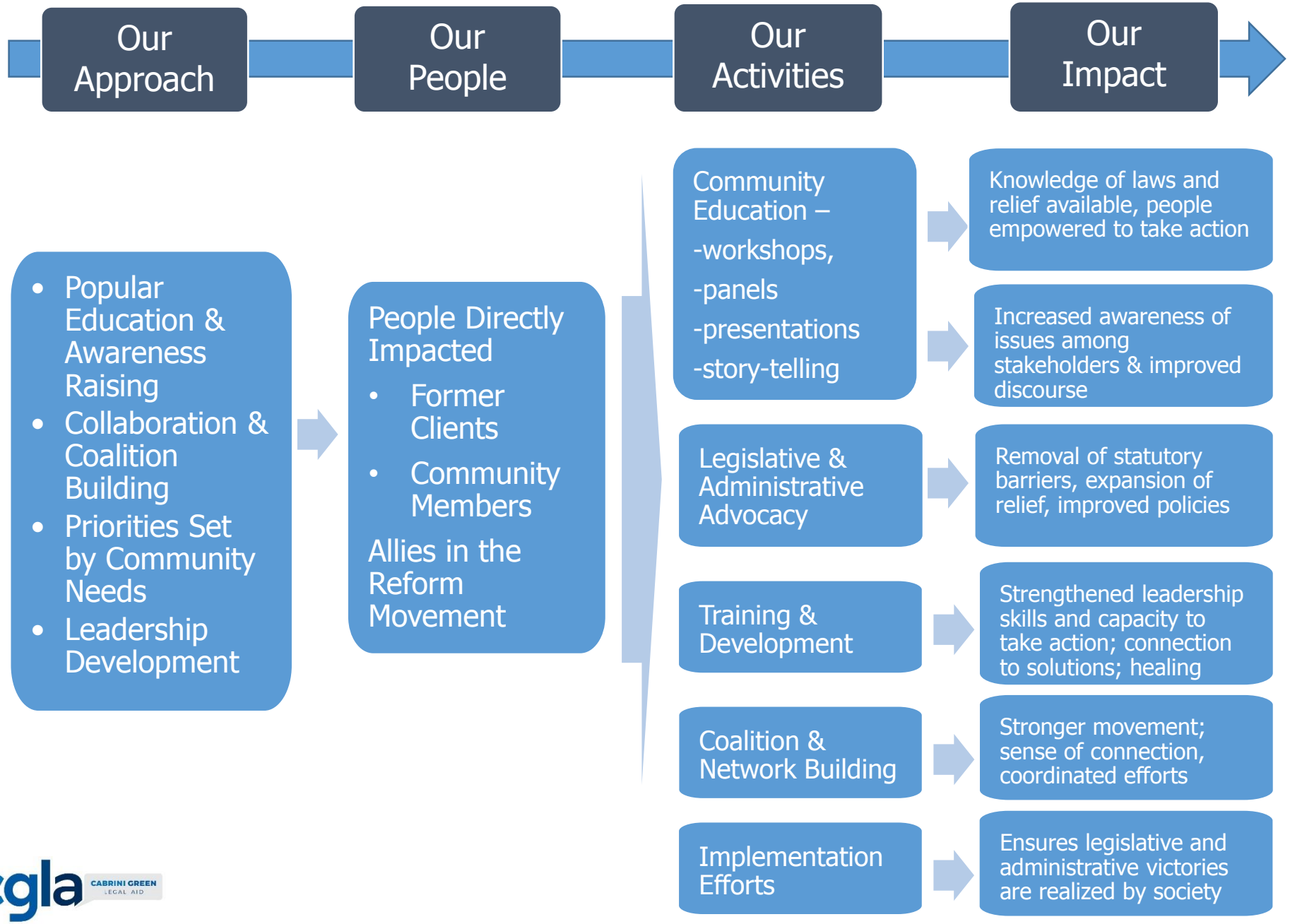
"Those closest to the problem are closest to the solution, but furthest from resources and power."

Glenn Martin, Founder of JustLeadership USA



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How we engage folks....

Leadership Council

- Advisory counsel of impacted community members, some former clients
- Serve as ambassadors of CGLA and lead educational and change efforts

Visible Voices

- Women-led, peer empowerment group for those impacted by incarceration
- Lead awareness raising events and build support for systemic change

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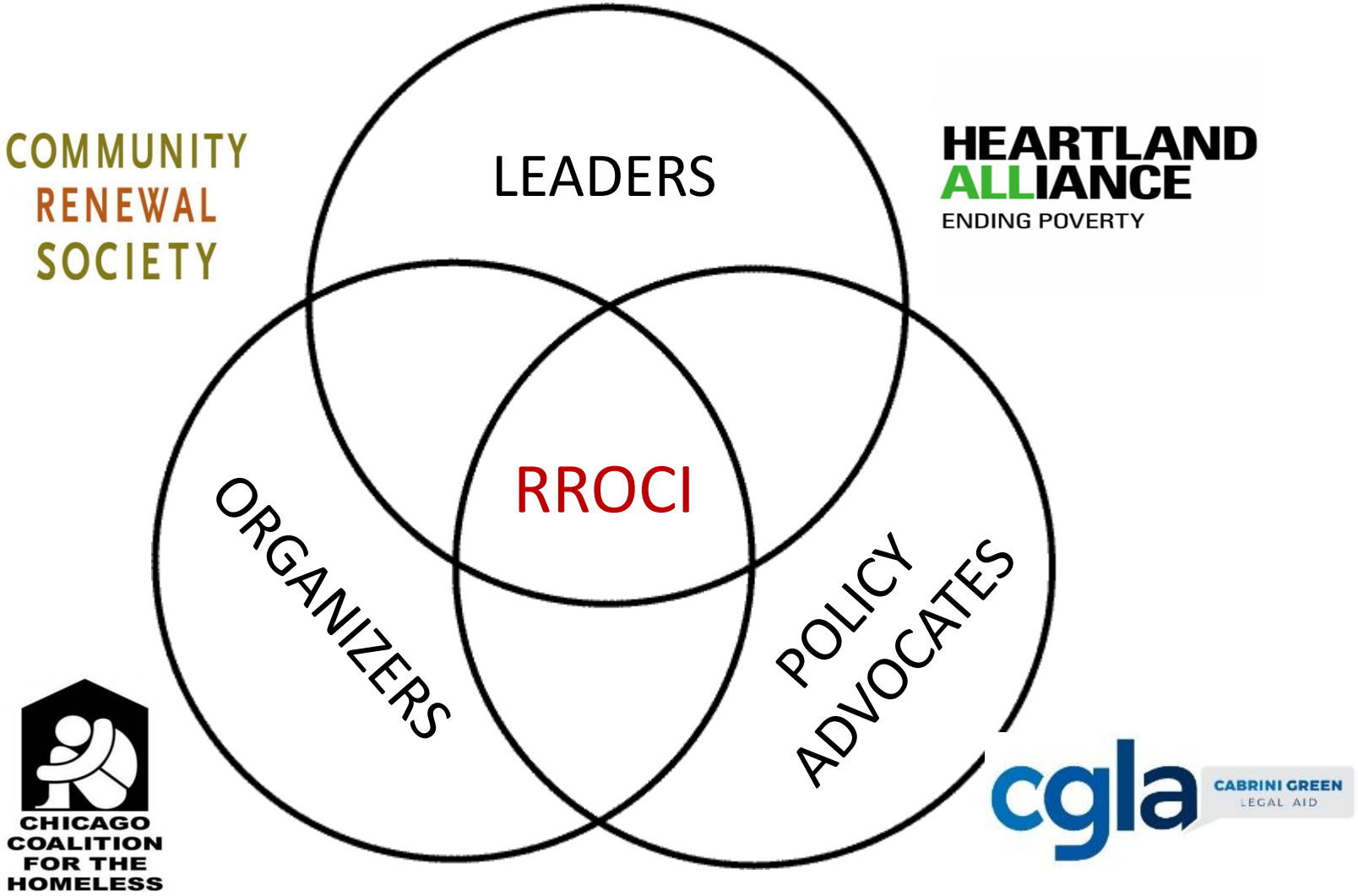
Leadership Council & Visible Voices Activities

- Community Education Workshops
- Panels & Speaking Engagements
- Story-Telling & the Arts
- Legislative Advocacy in Springfield

But we can't do it alone!

RESTORING RIGHTS & OPPORTUNITIES COALITION OF ILLINOIS



WHY we formed RROCI

- ✓People with records are experts of their own experience
- ✓No one tells our story better than us – WE create our own narratives
- ✓We are the ones who can shift the narrative

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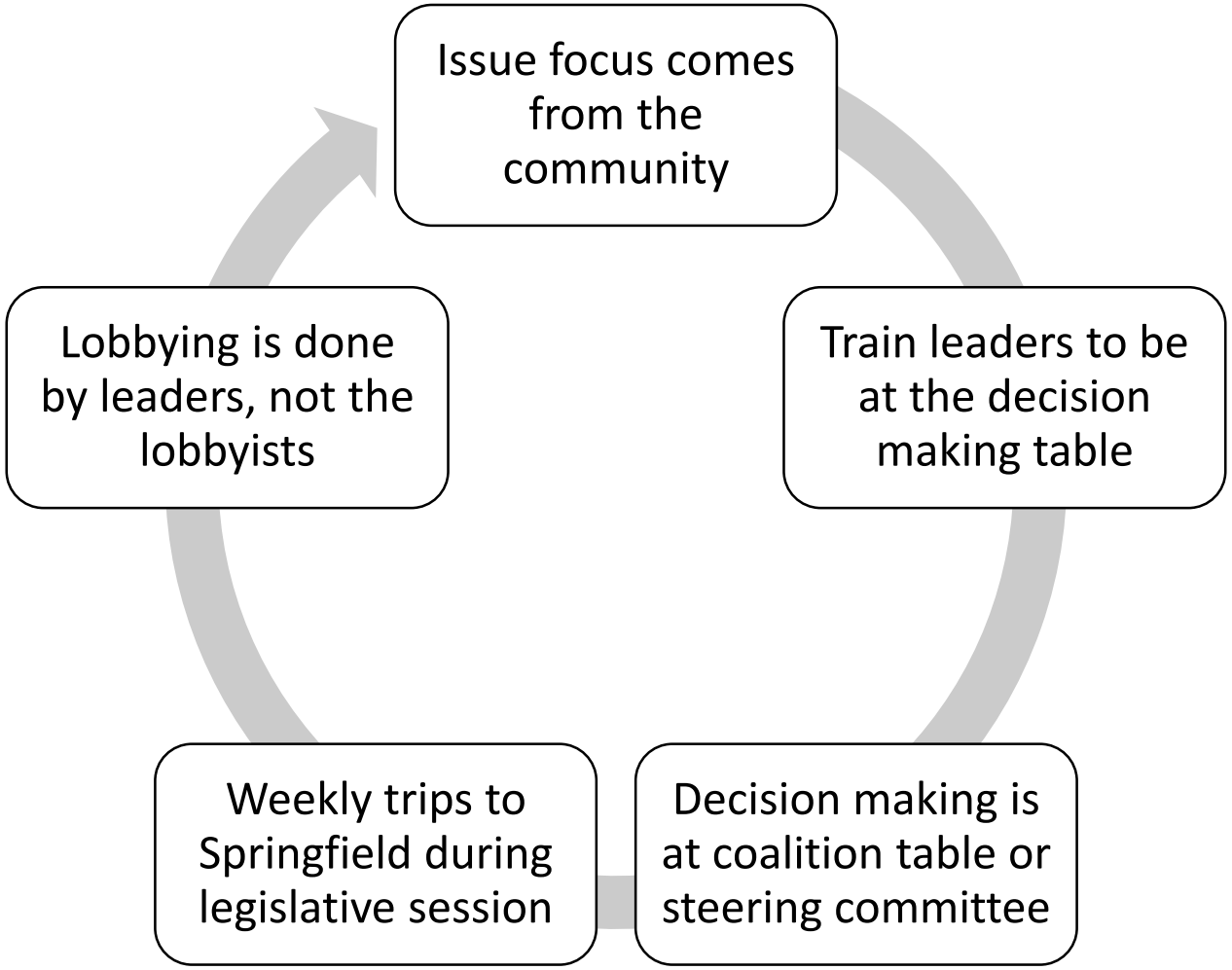
HOW we do it



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What we did – 2015 & 2016

- 2015 Gender Informed Practice Assessment (GIPA) Trauma-Informed* Interventions/approaches that incorporate the research on violence against women and girls and the impact of trauma; work intentionally to avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or (re)traumatizing the individual; enhance the knowledge and proficiency of staff and the organization to support each individual's coping capacity; and work to help survivors to manage their trauma symptoms successfully. *Definitions have been adapted from: Benedict, A. (2008) The Five Core Practice Areas of Gender Responsiveness. CORE Associates, LLC.
- One-Year of Progress The 2016 Logan Gender Informed Practices Assessment (GIPA) represented the first phase of a long-term reform partnership between the IDOC, WJI, CORE Associates Executive Director Alyssa Benedict, the National Resource Center on Justice-Involved Women (NRCJIW) and the USDOJ-National Institute of Corrections (NIC). It included a list of the department's top challenges, many of which were deeply linked to counterproductive disciplinary policies, and a series of recommendations designed to achieve systems change that ultimately led to the passage of the legislation.
- HB 3904: The Women's Correctional Services Act. This bill will require the Illinois Department of Corrections to establish gender responsive, trauma-informed, evidence-based and family-centered practices, policies & programs throughout all women's correctional facilities.

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WHAT we did – 2018

Task Force Aims to Reduce Number of Women in Illinois Prisons

- **The task force is made up of 100 women – including formerly incarcerated women, corrections officials, judges and prosecutors. Notable among them are Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke and Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx.**

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2019 Legislative Goals –

Bills Focused on Children Impacted by Incarceration

Support HB 2444

The Best Interest of the Child Act

Rep. Kelly Cassidy

The Problem

In Illinois, an estimated 148,000 children, 8% of children in the state, have had a parent in prison or jail during their childhood.[1] Nationwide, about 5.1 million children have experienced parental incarceration.[2] Children must have at least one secure bond with a caregiver in order to develop and thrive.[3] Parent-child separation due to a parent's incarceration is classified as an Adverse Childhood Experience under the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study.[4] This separation has lifelong consequences for children's physical and mental health and has a ripple effect in the community.

The Solution

House Bill 2444 provides a framework for judges to consider the harm to children when making decisions about parents at time of pre-trial detention and at sentencing through the use of a Family Impact Statement. It also allows consideration for defendants serving as caregivers of elderly and disabled relatives. Parents who are sentenced to treatment and services in the community can care for their families while healing and working to make amends for the harm that led to their criminal charges. This legislation would drastically improve families' lives and strengthen the surrounding community.

The Impact

Keeping Parents Out of Prison Leads to Better Health Outcomes for their Children. Providing safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children and families is a value most of us can agree on. However, criminal justice practices that separate children from their mothers and fathers are harmful. The justice system's default of incarceration tears apart families, hurts children's development, and has devastating long-term health consequences for children. Having courts consider community alternatives to incarceration that include treatment and programs instead of prison or jail can keep families intact.

Benefits of Community-Based Sentencing

- **Avoiding harm to children and families.** Multiple peer-reviewed studies connect ACEs, specific traumatic events that occur during childhood, to poor mental and physical health outcomes including serious chronic diseases that can result in premature death.[5]
- **More secure parental attachment.** Allowing incarcerated mothers and their babies to cohabitate leads to babies having more secure attachments to their mothers when compared to those who have not cohabitated.[6] Disrupting attachment for children up to school age can have severe, negative lifelong effects.
- **Healthier child development.** Community-based residential parenting programs, where mothers can serve their sentences with their infants in a non-prison setting that offers housing and social services, enhance healthy mother-child bonding and foster healthy child development.[7]
- **Improved parenting skills.** Family-based drug treatment programs that offer parenting skills training and home-based case management services, are successful in reducing parental drug abuse and improving parenting skills. Parenting classes for fathers improve parent-child relationships and attachment, children's self-concept and behaviors, and feelings of competence among fathers.[8]
- **Reduced substance abuse.** Among women who participate in residential drug treatment, those who have their children with them are far more likely to complete the program when compared to those who are separated from their children.[9] Children of parents who participate in family-based drug treatment are less likely to develop a substance abuse disorder.[10]
- **Increased likelihood of school success and economic self-sufficiency,** contributing to community well-being.[11]

For more information, please contact Beth Johnson, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, 773-951-1173 or bethjohnson@cgla.net

Support HB 2649

Bill of Rights for Children of the Incarcerated

Ramirez - Feigenholtz - Slaughter - Harper

The Problem

An Annie E. Casey report estimated that 148,000 children in Illinois have an incarcerated parent.[1] The average age of a child with an incarcerated parent is 8 years old, with 22% of children being under the age of 5.[2]

There is currently no state requirement that children be considered when creating policies and procedures that impact incarcerated parents. Children's lives and prospects are profoundly affected by the multiple institutions that lay claim to their parents—police, courts, jails and prisons, probation and parole—but they have no rights, explicit or implicit, within any of these jurisdictions.

The Solution

By adopting the Bill of Rights, children of incarcerated parents will be contemplated in policy and procedure decisions, reducing the trauma and impact of their parent's involvement with the criminal legal system. The Bill of Rights, created and modeled after the Bill of Rights originally formed by San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership and adopted by many agencies, creates a roadmap for reform to safeguard children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system by making sure children's rights and best interests are considered.

HB 2649 codifies the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents, requiring agencies to create policies and procedures that take these rights into consideration. Illinois would be the second state in the nation to take this action.

Impact of Parental Separation

Children who are separated from their parents due to incarceration experience higher rates of physical health problems, higher rates of mental health problems, more behavioral issues, poorer performance in school, higher likelihood of placement in foster care, and higher rates of emotional issues which can have mental health impacts.[3]

HB 2649 requires that children of incarcerated parents be recognized to have the following rights:

1. To be protected from additional trauma at the time of parental arrest and sentencing.
2. To be informed of the arrest and any sentence in an age-appropriate manner.
3. To be heard and respected by decision makers when decisions are made about the child.
4. To be considered when decisions are made about the child's parent.
5. To be cared for in the absence of the child's parent in a way that prioritizes the child's physical, mental and emotional needs.
6. To be supported during the parent's incarceration.
7. To speak with, see and touch the incarcerated parent.
8. To be informed about local services and programs that can provide support to the child as the child deals with the parent's incarceration.
9. To not be judged, labeled or blamed for the parent's incarceration.
10. To have a lifelong relationship with the incarcerated parent.

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HB **2444**

Passed the House with strong bi-partisan support

- **The Problem**

In Illinois, an estimated 186,000 children, 6% of children in the state, have had a parent in prison or jail during their childhood.[1] Nationwide, about 5.1 million children have experienced parental incarceration.[2] Children must have at least one secure bond with a caregiver in order to develop and thrive.[3] Parent-child separation due to a parent's incarceration is classified as an Adverse Childhood Experience under the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study.[4] This separation has lifelong consequences for children's physical and mental health and has a ripple effect in the community.

- **The Solution**

House Bill 2444 (House Amendment 1) provides a framework for judges to consider the harm to children when making decisions about parents at time of sentencing through the use of a Family Impact Statement as a factor in mitigation. It also allows consideration for defendants serving as caregivers of elderly and disabled relatives. Parents who are sentenced to treatment and services in the community can care for their families while healing and working to make amends for the harm that led to their criminal charges. This legislation would drastically improve families' lives and strengthen the surrounding community.

- **The Impact**

Keeping Parents Out of Prison Leads to Better Health Outcomes for their Children. Providing safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children and families is a value most of us can agree on. However, criminal justice practices that separate children from their mothers and fathers are harmful. The justice system's default of incarceration tears apart families, hurts children's development, and has devastating long-term health consequences for children. Having courts consider community alternatives to incarceration that include treatment and programs instead of prison or jail can keep families intact.

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Benefits of Community-Based Sentencing

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More secure parental attachment. Allowing incarcerated mothers and their babies to cohabitate leads to babies having more secure attachments to their mothers when compared to those who have not cohabitated.[6] **Disrupting attachment for children up to school age can have severe, negative lifelong effects.**

Healthier child development. Community-based residential parenting programs, where mothers can serve their sentences with their infants in a non-prison setting that offers housing and social services, enhance healthy mother-child bonding and foster healthy child development.[7]

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Reduced substance abuse. Among women who participate in residential drug treatment, those who have their children with them are far more likely to complete the program when compared to those who are separated from their children.[9] **Children of parents who participate in family-based drug treatment are less likely to develop a substance abuse disorder.**[10]

Increased likelihood of school success and economic self-sufficiency, contributing to community well-being. [11]

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HB 2649
Task Force on Children of Incarcerated Parents

- **The Problem**

An Annie E. Casey report estimated that 186,000 children in Illinois have an incarcerated parent. The average age of a child with an incarcerated parent is 8 years old, with 22% of children being under the age of 5.[2] Children's lives and prospects are profoundly affected by the multiple institutions that lay claim to their parents—police, courts, jails and prisons, probation and parole—but they have no rights, explicit or implicit, within any of these jurisdictions

- **The Solution**

The Task Force on Children of Incarcerated Parents will develop and propose policies and procedures after review of available research, best practices and effective interventions. This Task Force will examine how children of incarcerated parents will be contemplated in policy and procedure decisions, reducing the trauma and impact of their parent's involvement with the criminal legal system. This Task Force will create a roadmap for reform to safeguard children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system by making sure children's rights and best interests are considered.

- **Impact of Parental Separation**

Children who are separated from their parents due to incarceration experience higher rates of physical health problems, higher rates of mental health problems, more behavioral issues, poorer performance in school, higher likelihood of placement in foster care, and higher rates of emotional issues which can have.

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The Task Force's guiding principles are modeled after the Bill of Rights for Children of the Incarcerated originally formed by San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership and adopted by many agencies throughout the nation.

HB 2649 sets forth the following GUIDING PRINCIPLES for the Task Force:

- **Children should be protected from additional trauma at the time of parental arrest.**
- **Children should be heard, respected, and considered by decision makers when decisions are made about them.**
- **Children should be considered when decisions are made about their parent.**
- **Children should be cared for and provided access to support in the absence of their parent in a way that prioritizes their physical, mental, and emotional needs.**
- **Children should be given an opportunity to speak with and see their incarcerated parent. The opportunity to touch should take into account security concerns.**
- **Children should have access to local services and programs that can provide support to them as they deal with their parent's incarceration.**
- **Children should not be judged, labeled or blamed for their parent's incarceration.**
- **Children should be able to have a lifelong relationship with their parents.**

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It’s changing laws and systems,

but also hearts and minds