

# A Path Forward for Alabama's Prison System

## A HOST OF INTERCONNECTED PROBLEMS

Prisons are unacceptably overcrowded at 160 percent capacity, which increases internal violent conflict.

Prisons are unacceptably understaffed, which increases the potential for violence without enough staff to prevent the flow of contraband or prevent or end violence between incarcerated people. At least 26 people, including prison staff, have died violently over the past two years, a rate exceeding every other state's prison system.

Prisons are unacceptably ill-equipped to provide constitutional level of care for people's health and mental health issues, which leaves people hopeless, more likely to self-harm, and less likely to effectively re-enter society. At least 15 people have died by suicide in the past 15 months, a rate quadruple the national average.

## A SET OF SOLUTIONS & PATH FORWARD

### 1. Strategic prison construction by the state:

- The state should close at least two of the most deplorable facilities, one of which should be Holman Correctional Facility, and replace them with facilities in Southern Alabama.
- The state should build a new medical and mental health correctional campus close to professional services for those with the most serious conditions. The facility must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Private prison companies should not be involved in construction, staffing, or operation of any facilities.

### 2. Increasing staff and reducing violence:

- ADOC must aggressively pursue hiring 2,200 correctional officers by 2022, as required by federal court order.
- ADOC must increase its existing funding request to the legislature this year from funds necessary to pay for 500 officers to funding for 1,100 officers.
- To retain experienced officers, and thereby increase safety, the state must increase salaries beyond the 20% requested this year.

### 3. Sentencing and parole reform now to reduce the prison population safely:

Alabama has among the highest incarceration rates in the country without the highest crime rates. In short, Alabama locks too many people up who pose no threat to public safety. Previous modest, bipartisan sentencing and parole reforms enacted in 2015 are projected to save \$350 million and reduce the prison population by more than 4,000 by 2021, without jeopardizing public safety.

### The state can continue on the path started in 2015 by:

- Increasing the amount at which property and drug offences trigger felony charges.
- Developing an evidence-based plan that allows for the release of rehabilitated prisoners who pose little threat to public safety.
- Limiting the number of children who are tried as adults.

## GOALS OF ALABAMA'S PRISON SYSTEM:

Protect public safety

Make prisons safe for officers & incarcerated people

Ensure constitutional levels of care

Use taxpayer dollars effectively