

**FACT SHEET** for letter **Re: The Council of State Governments (CSG)** sent 01/13/2017 to Chief Justice Gants, Governor Baker, Speaker De Leo and Senate President Rosenberg.

**The letter urges the above four top state officials to make sure all the important objectives they announced in 2015 are addressed by CSG in their final report:**

- lowering Massachusetts jail and prison populations
- reducing recidivism and lowering prison costs
- improving outcomes for those in the criminal justice system

**Legislation:** Before the CSG legislative reform package is finalized, we ask that the following **legislative proposals**, currently missing, be added:

- eliminate mandatory minimums for drug offenses
- increase diversion for juveniles and adults
- institute compassionate release for the elderly/dying (as in 45 other states)
- institute presumptive parole (\$5K per parolee vs. \$53K per state prisoner per year)

**Executive Policy:** Aside from legislation, we urge the Governor and Executive Branch administrators to **implement changes** suggested by CSG to reform DOC and Parole Board practices to improve public safety and, at the same time, save millions of tax dollars:

- reform DOC classification practices and mandate timely step-down before release
- increase the current dismally-low parole rates
- increase best practice post-release programming and support from parole
- restructure the DOC budget so that resources are realigned to provide funds for education, counseling, mental health services, programming and vocational training. (These services accounted for only 1.98% of the DOC budget in 2014.)
- stop using lengthy stays in solitary confinement as a punishment. MA is one of few states allowing ten years in solitary; the UN states that more than 15 days constitutes torture. No legislative change is necessary, just executive practice.

**Prioritize addressing the racial inequities in our criminal justice system which CSG identified as a serious on-going problem in our state.** We hope that the named four recipients of the letter will ask CSG to recommend best practices for addressing this long-standing problem in their final report.