

Press Release...



from State Representative Justin Slaughter

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Slaughter's Historic Criminal Justice Reform Package **Signed into Law by Governor**

CHICAGO – A historic package of criminal justice reforms spearheaded by state Rep. Justin Slaughter, D-Chicago, is now law as Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed the legislation today, making Illinois a leader in the effort to root out systemic racism and ensure justice and equality for all residents.

“After decades of demanding changes in our criminal justice system, we are finally making groundbreaking progress in our fight for justice and equality,” said Slaughter. “This legislation is long overdue, and it is time for our state to lead the way in implementing meaningful reforms that will help put an end to the criminalization of Black and Brown communities and address our society’s serious problem with incarceration, violence and police brutality. By signing this legislation into law, we are taking massive strides to create a criminal justice system that works for everyone, regardless of one’s skin color, neighborhood or income.”

Slaughter’s House Bill 3653 will improve prison practices, increase transparency, enhance police accountability and address policies that have contributed to the unjust criminalization of Black and Brown residents. Before passing the monumental measure, Slaughter, who chairs the House Judiciary – Criminal Committee, held a total of 12 hearings that included over 40 hours of testimony from over 90 witnesses in both support and opposition of the reforms. After passing both the House and Senate during the Illinois General Assembly’s January 2021 session, the bill was signed into law today by the governor.

Key aspects of the bill include:

- Abolishing the cash bail system, which unfairly held non-violent offenders in jail simply because they can’t pay, and creating a smarter system that bases custody decisions on the risk an offender poses to the community, rather than their access to cash;
- Allowing courts to waive unduly harsh mandatory minimum sentences in the cases of non-violent offenders;
- Ending the practice of suspending driver’s licenses for unpaid traffic and red-light camera tickets, which criminalized poverty by forcing those least able to pay to choose between breaking the law or falling further behind by not working;
- Ending the use of violent choke holds and creating a more practical definition of when deadly force can be used by an officer;
- Closing the loopholes in law that have prevented criminal and civil accountability in the most severe cases of officer-involved killings, including creating a task force to examine changes to

qualified immunity rules and modifying collective bargaining practices to prevent agreements from shielding officers against accountability for disorderly conduct;

- Implementing statewide standards for regular mental health screenings for law enforcement officers;
- Ending prison gerrymandering to ensure that more resources are allocated to Black and Brown communities.

“This law begins the process of building a smarter criminal justice system – where bail and sentencing decisions are based on the interest of public safety rather than a defendant’s wealth and skin color, and where bad actors in our police departments are held accountable while those who serve with integrity have the resources they need,” continued Slaughter. “While the work for equality must continue, I am grateful to the governor and my colleagues in Illinois Legislative Black Caucus. I am committed to fighting for our communities, and I look forward to continuing to pave the way for change.”

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