



## FAMM: Who we are



For more than a decade, FAMM has worked to change Pennsylvania's sentencing and prison policies through engagement, education, and advocacy.

FAMM supports reforms to mandatory minimum and life without parole sentences; increased use of early release and parole for elderly and ill prisoners; expanded use of executive clemency; prison mail policies that keep families connected; reforms to probation and parole; and record expungement.

### WHY IS FAMM IN PENNSYLVANIA?

Pennsylvania has the highest incarceration rate in the northeastern U.S., the second-highest number of people serving life without parole sentences in the country, and the third-highest rate of people on probation. In 2015, the state's Supreme Court struck down most of its mandatory minimum laws as unconstitutional. Since then, FAMM has opposed efforts to reinstate mandatory minimum sentences.

For nearly three decades, **FAMM** has united the voices of affected families, the formerly incarcerated, and a range of stakeholders and advocates to fight for a fairer and more effective justice system. FAMM's focus on ending a one-size-fits-all punishment structure has led to reforms to sentencing and prison policies at the federal level and in multiple states, and has helped establish rehabilitative programs for the 94 percent of all prisoners who will be released one day.

### ORGANIZING PA FAMILIES FOR REFORM

FAMM has two state-based organizers in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh who anchor the group's groundbreaking efforts to identify, engage, and mobilize families affected by broken criminal justice policies in Pennsylvania. The organizers equip and empower incarcerated people and their families to become advocates for reform – in the news, in local communities, and in the halls of the State Capitol.

### PENNSYLVANIA BY THE NUMBERS

Lengthy mandatory sentences did not enhance public safety and drove Pennsylvania's prison population from 8,000 in 1980 to more than 50,000 in 2013. Reforms like the Justice Reinvestment Act and the reduced availability of mandatory minimum sentences have helped reduce the prison population in recent years, but the state still spends more than \$2 billion annually on corrections. FAMM seeks to prevent the reenactment of costly, counterproductive mandatory minimums. We support alternatives that protect public safety without hurting families and taxpayers.

### ADVOCATING BETTER SENTENCING LAWS

Since the state's Supreme Court struck down mandatory minimums in 2015, **the state's prison population and costs have shrunk, and crime has declined**. Despite this progress, there have been multiple attempts to reinstate them by state lawmakers. Mandatory minimum sentencing laws have not made Pennsylvanians safer, nor have they reduced or deterred crime. The independent Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing concluded in 2009, "Neither length of sentence, nor the imposition of the mandatory sentence per se, was

a predictor of recidivism." The Commission also stated that offenders are not deterred by mandatory sentences because they do not know which crimes carry them. In 2017 and 2018, FAMM successfully defeated all bills to reinstate mandatory minimum sentences in Pennsylvania – and plans to maintain this record of successful opposition as new bills to bring back mandatory minimum sentences emerge.

## PAROLE AND PROBATION

With nearly 300,000 people under community supervision, probation and parole are major issues in the state. Probation makes it difficult for people to participate in everyday family life, find and keep jobs, relocate when new opportunities arise, and stay out of jail or prison. Minor technical violations of probation conditions can put people behind bars for weeks, months, or even years, and lengthy probation terms keep people under supervision long after they cease to be a public safety risk.

Pennsylvania also has the second-highest number of people serving life without parole sentences in the country. These long, expensive sentences incarcerate people long past the point at which they are a danger to the public.

FAMM has supported several bills introduced in 2019 to reform parole and probation in Pennsylvania and plans to continue doing so in 2020.

## PRISON REFORM: IMPROVING LIVING CONDITIONS AND PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

FAMM works with thousands of families around the state to promote a prison system that provides the basic needs of the people in its care. Priorities include maintaining a healthy environment; protecting people from abuse and exploitation; ensuring due process in decisions that affect prisoners' lives; creating incentives for work, good behavior, and rehabilitation; and protecting important ties to family and friends through open visitation.

FAMM also began **educating Pennsylvania lawmakers** about the need to increase the use of early release and parole for elderly and ill prisoners, and launched the **#MyMailMatters** campaign to oppose new policies that require that prisoners receive only photocopies of their mail. This campaign was part of a successful effort to partially repeal this policy.

## LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS

During the 2019 legislative session, FAMM supported meaningful changes to Pennsylvania's sentencing laws, including bills that attempted to institute mandatory minimums in certain drug and weapon crimes, creating medical and

elderly parole specifications, and significant probation and parole reform. These efforts are led by FAMM's Pennsylvania state policy director.

---

## STORYTELLING FOR CHANGE

FAMM's storytelling team continually shares the stories of currently and formerly incarcerated Pennsylvanians and their families, as well as those on probation or in reentry. These stories illustrate the need for reform in ways that statistics never can. Many of the subjects of FAMM stories go on to become powerful advocates for reform in the state.

**Derrick Cain** was sentenced to a 10-year mandatory prison term for selling cocaine. When his wife went back to school to become a pediatric nurse, Derrick's salary alone wasn't enough to keep them afloat, so he worked during the day and sold cocaine at night. This landed him in prison after

the friend who introduced him to selling cocaine became a confidential informant. Judge Legrome Davis told Derrick that he was unable to use any discretion in sentencing, stating, "This is a mandatory [sentence]. It means that if I gave you one second less than ten years in jail, I would be violating the law." Derrick served his time in federal prison and is once again a Philadelphia resident, sharing his story with the media, lawmakers, and the community and helping returning citizens with reentry.