



FAMM State Work Round-Up: November 2024

Many are focused on state and federal elections, and lawmakers are no different. Most statehouses are quiet this time of year, with some legislatures returning after the election for “lame duck sessions,” which are the short time frames after the election before newly-elected officials start their sessions in 2025.

FAMM makes the most out of this period by preparing legislation, meeting with potential sponsors, and strategizing and training with our members and partners. Here’s your quarterly round-up of our state work:



Alabama

FAMM and state partners are making our position clear to lawmakers: The passage of SB 322 earlier in the year was a first step, not the last. The new law requires the Department of Corrections to work with families much more, but it’s not going to change the dangerous conditions in the state’s prisons. FAMM is making the case for truly independent prison oversight. [Check out this compilation of testimony, which begins with our staff.](#)

The Alabama legislature is now recessed until 2025.



California

California's legislative session ended in August. FAMM's primary focus this year was SB 94, which would give certain people sentenced to life without parole prior to 1996 the opportunity for resentencing before a judge. Though the coalition fought very hard, the bill came up inches short in a difficult election year. FAMM also supported three bills which did pass the legislature. Governor Gavin Newsom has signed AB 2483, which will standardize judicial hearings and create better processes to support re-sentencings. He also signed SB 1069, which gives the Office of the Inspector General authority to investigate cases of sexual misconduct by prison staff. Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed the third bill, SB 254, which would have provided better media and lawmaker access into state prisons.



Illinois

Illinois is holding a short veto session in November, though the legislative session is largely over until 2025. FAMM continues to develop support for second look, particularly the Earned Reentry bill, which would allow people who have served 20 years to apply for release. We are also working to repeal so-called "truth in sentencing" laws with state partners, which require people to serve an arbitrary and often high percentage of their sentences. We would like to replace this with earned time credit for education, work, and programming participation. FAMM also

supports independent prison oversight in Illinois.



Maryland

FAMM was part of the coalition that helped pass independent prison oversight earlier this year, a huge win. Since then, the state and the coalition have been working to implement the new law, which went into effect July 1. In fact, Governor Wes Moore [recently appointed the new correctional ombudsperson](#). We are also working on second look laws and compassionate release in Maryland, as the state has one of the worst compassionate release systems in the country. The Maryland legislature is in recess until 2025.



Michigan

A win! Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed SB 599, which creates expanded eligibility for incarcerated people to get “medically frail” release. Further, the new law allows people the option of actually going home if they get medically frail release, instead of just to a medical facility. FAMM and state partners worked hard on this bill and made sure that the legislature heard from impacted voices including incarcerated people, their families, and the medical community. The Michigan legislature will return after the election for a “lame duck” session until the end of the year. In this short time, FAMM is working to pass another bill that would create a sentencing commission

in the state to study sentencing laws and their impact.



Missouri

We ended the crack powder sentencing disparity in Missouri earlier this year and are right on to the next priority! FAMM is happy to report that there is a strong and growing coalition for independent prison oversight in Missouri in 2025. We are working on finding legislative sponsors and building support before the next session begins. To that end, our staff spent several fruitful days with lawmakers in Kansas City this summer. We are also investigating whether there are realistic paths to reforming prison credits and compassionate release in the state. The legislature is in recess until 2025.



Pennsylvania

FAMM is working hard with boots on the ground to advance medical release in the legislature and felony murder reform in the legislature and courts in Pennsylvania. Our staff supported the efforts of state partners in challenging automatic life without parole laws for felony murder in the courts by filing supporting briefs and helping pack the courtroom for the arguments. [You can read more in this article.](#)

The Pennsylvania legislature is active until the end of the year, which marks the end of a marathon two-year session.



Tennessee

FAMM continues to shed light on the horrendous conditions and reports from the Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, after successfully calling on the U.S. Department of Justice to open an investigation earlier this year. [Read more in this article](#). Further, we maintain that the state needs independent oversight for all its prisons, and we're letting the legislature know. FAMM staff and partners presented testimony to lawmakers recently and it was received well. A new legislative session will begin in 2025, and we'll be ready to advance prison oversight and elder release.



Virginia

FAMM supports ending the crack powder sentencing disparity in Virginia. Leading up to the 2025 legislative session, we are working with advocates to educate lawmakers and state officials about the importance of treating these chemically identical drugs proportionally under the law. FAMM continues to support efforts to get the new independent correctional ombudsman's office up and running, following our successful efforts with state partners to pass prison oversight legislation earlier this year.



Washington

FAMM continues to build support for second chances in Washington. In 2025, we will be focused on the resentencing of people whose past juvenile adjudications automatically increased their sentences in adult court after passing prospective reforms in 2023 as well as second look for people who were young at the time of their offense. For people in the Seattle and Tacoma area, FAMM is co-hosting a symposium with Look2Justice on November 16th in Tukwila. We will be focusing on the rights and needs of survivors in resentencing policy. [RSVP here.](#)

You can read more about our state work [on our website.](#)

We also have lots of events and resources for all 50 states, including [memos outlining every state's compassionate release and clemency laws.](#)

You can also [join our Facebook groups or one of our regular State Policy Update calls or Advocacy trainings](#) to get connected.

Thank you for your support!



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