

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/prison-overcrowding-wont-fix-itself>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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In Ohio, we have a problem with prison overcrowding. As a recent Department of Justice Report shows, Ohio's prison population ranks sixth among all states. Last year, Ohio only managed to reduce its prison population by 0.4%, which is exactly 210 people. In a state that [currently locks up 11,854 more people than our prisons and jails are designed to house](#), that reduction is in no way adequate. Why does Ohio continue to have this problem? Why have our prisons been overcrowded for more than a decade? One factor is enhanced sentencing bills appearing in the Statehouse. **Making a Tough Problem Harder to Solve** According to [a recent report](#) by the ACLU of Ohio, the Ohio legislature continues to introduce bills that enhance criminal sentences, create new crimes, and extend the scope of current laws to cover new people and situations. These are bills that aim to incarcerate more people for longer periods of time. This legislative session alone, our representatives have introduced 54 new bills that will send more Ohioans to prison or jail.

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Individually, each bill may seem as though it will have a negligible effect on our prison and jail population. However, as enhanced sentencing legislation piles up, its effects can be huge. When one in every eight bills introduced in Ohio House, and one in every eleven in the Ohio Senate, enhance, create, or expand criminal penalties, is it any wonder that Ohio has struggled to reduce its prison population? These bills undermine efforts to improve our criminal justice system. **A Serious Look at a Serious Problem** We need to take prison reform seriously. In our country, [1 in 9](#) men will be incarcerated at some point in their lifetime. For black men, that rate is [1 in 3](#). Mass incarceration is a problem that [damages us, our families, and our friends](#) and excludes people from social systems long after they have served their sentences. Rather than continue to pay the human costs of our system of incarceration, our state legislators need to work towards reform. That means shutting down the Statehouse to prison pipeline.

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