

PRIORITIZING VICTIMS & REHABILITATION

Public safety policies should stop the cycle of crime by meeting the needs of crime victims and reducing recidivism. Yet, Michigan's current policies are falling far short of both those goals, undermining public safety. Despite massive public spending on prisons, the state maintains high barriers for crime victims to access help and lacks a focus on rehabilitation that can make communities safer by stopping the cycle of crime.

Michigan has an opportunity to improve its public safety system by prioritizing both support for victims and rehabilitation, through the enactment of proven policies, supported by crime survivors across the state.

THE ISSUES

Communities are safer when people incarcerated complete rehabilitation before their release and are prepared for employment and taking care of themselves and their families. But while almost **20% of Michigan's state budget—around \$2 billion—is spent on prisons, the system does not do enough to incentivize people in prison to participate in rehabilitative programs** that are proven to reduce recidivism and stop cycles of crime. At the same time, state law creates significant challenges for crime victims to access recovery services. The state's victim compensation program, which provides direct support to survivors in the aftermath of victimization, is weighed down by bureaucratic hurdles that hold Michigan back from having a system that provides adequate help.

THE PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Increasing access to and supports within Michigan's victim compensation system, as well as supporting rehabilitation and efforts to reduce recidivism, will improve the health, safety, and well-being of crime survivors and communities across the state. These policies, supported by evidence and crime survivors in Michigan, are being advanced through the Safer Michigan Act legislation that will help achieve shared safety for all:

1. Increase rehabilitation programs

Crime victims in Michigan want accountability—and justice system policies that disrupt, rather than perpetuate, the cycle of crime. Michigan can join most other states in incentivizing programs that reduce recidivism, make prisons safer, and make reentry into society more successful. By enacting productivity credits that incentivize people sentenced to prison to participate in rehabilitative programs, the state can improve safety, save taxpayer dollars, and expand its workforce.

These programs are broadly supported by victims of crime across the state. Eight in 10 crime survivors in Michigan support reducing prison sentences and three out of four believe rehabilitation, drug and mental health treatment are more effective at preventing future crimes.

2. Expand eligibility so all victims get help

The current victim compensation program excludes survivors who experience mental and emotional trauma as a result of crime.

Michigan should extend the program's support for counseling and loss of wages to all victims of crime, and to victims' familial household members.

3. Cover survivors at their level of actual need

Michigan's compensation coverage is below the national average and well below actual costs. Michigan should increase caps to reflect actual costs for funeral expenses, lost wages/income, and other losses resulting from being a victim of crime.

4. Broaden support for survivors

Victim compensation support does not extend to many important challenges that victims face while recovering from crime. Michigan should expand the list of covered supports to explicitly include relocation, transportation, childcare, job retraining, lost tuition, residential security, a full range of funeral and burial costs, and other crime-related costs. Michigan should also cover missed work as a result of victimization.

5. Change unreasonable time limits

At just 48 hours, Michigan has the shortest time limit in the country to report a crime and be eligible for compensation. Michigan must allow survivors time to heal and process their experience without creating additional burdens, by eliminating reporting time limits and extending the time frame to file a victim compensation application to five years.

6. Secure safe and stable housing for all survivors

In Michigan, many survivors of violent crime are unable to maintain safe and stable housing as a result of their victimization. Michigan should extend lease termination protection to all witnesses and survivors of violence, along with their family members. It will enable victims to relocate for their safety.