



# Jails Task Force Newsletter

Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration

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## Looking Back: Jail Reforms Passed in December with Overwhelming Support; Signed into Law in January

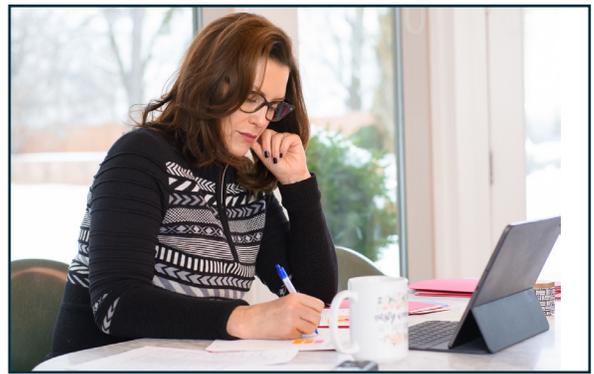
In January 2021, **Gov. Gretchen Whitmer** signed into law a bipartisan package of 20 bills that fundamentally reshape how the state utilizes county jails. The package, which was passed with overwhelming legislative support during the final week of the 2020 session, was based on policy recommendations from the Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration, led by **Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II** and **Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack**.

As a result of these bills, Michigan residents will:

- Face fewer license suspensions for issues unrelated to driving safety;
- Be more likely to receive a citation for a misdemeanor and a summons for a missed court appearance rather than being arrested;
- Be less likely to receive a jail sentence for a non-serious offense; and,
- Receive a probation term and conditions proportional to their offense.

“The public's trust in the justice system comes from fair process and fair outcomes,” said Chief Justice McCormack. “These changes will build public trust because they reflect fair process and will produce fairer outcomes and because the public was directly involved in getting here.”

“I’m extraordinarily proud of our collective work over the last two years to understand and improve the criminal justice system,” said Lt. Governor Gilchrist. “Next year, we must continue to work together to find ways to provide second chances through a smarter justice system that positions people for more successful futures.”



*Gov. Gretchen Whitmer remotely signing jail reform bills on January 4, 2021. (Photo: Governor's Office)*

“This is not reactionary policy – it’s thoughtful and purposeful,” said **Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey**, who joined with other leaders in creating the Task Force in 2019. “These bills are rooted in data, informed by research, and built on the consensus and compromise of a diverse group of stakeholders.” 📄

*(Read the full [December 21, 2020 news release](#) for more details.)*

### UNDERSTANDING THE NEW LAWS

The Jails Task Force has prepared convenient resources that provide straightforward information about the new laws:

**[Overview of 2020 Legislative Package](#)**  
*2-page summary of bills*

**[Guide to Michigan's 2020 Jail Reforms](#)**  
*Policy guide that includes summaries of the new laws with regard to appearance tickets, arrest warrants, jail sentencing, community supervision, driver's license suspensions, and misdemeanor reclassification.*

# Looking Ahead: What's Next for Jail and Pretrial Reform?

Despite the huge 2020 legislative win, the Task Force still has much more work to do. Timing dictated that the recommendations be split over two legislative sessions.

Here is a preview of the Task Force's 2021 priorities:

- **Keeping people with behavioral health challenges out of the justice system whenever possible through diversion:**
  - Nearly a quarter of people in Michigan's jails have serious mental illness.
  - Investing in community-based treatment and behavioral health training benefits everyone: officers and communities are safer, law enforcement time and resources are used more efficiently, and individuals get the support they need to lead healthy and productive lives.
- **Prioritizing the needs of victims and survivors:**
  - The experiences and testimony of crime victims and survivors in Michigan are essential to understanding and reforming the criminal justice system.
- **Balancing liberty and public safety in pretrial decision-making:**
  - Half of people in Michigan's jails are detained pretrial, a population that has tripled.
  - Recent studies have found that pretrial detention can lead to loss of employment, housing, or child custody, destabilizing individuals and increasing their likelihood of future offending. 🏠



*Task Force Co-Chairs presenting the Report and Recommendations to legislative leaders in January 2020. (l to r): Sen. Mike Shirkey, Senate Majority Leader; Rep. Lee Chatfield, then-Speaker of the House; Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II; and Chief Justice Bridget McCormack.*

***“You wouldn’t bring someone having a heart attack to a jail. But every day, people having mental health crises are brought here because there’s nowhere else for them to go.”***

***-Law enforcement testimony before the Task Force***

## TASK FORCE RESOURCES FOR 2021

[Overview of Jails Task Force 2021 Legislative Priorities](#)

[Summary of Jails Task Force Behavioral Health Policies](#)

[Summary of Jails Task Force Pretrial Policies](#)

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