

Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration – Meeting #1
Wayne State University Law School
July 24, 2019

On April 17th, 2019, Governor Whitmer was joined by a bipartisan group of state and county leaders in creating, through Executive Order No. 2019-10, the Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration. The Task Force has been directed to use data and research to make recommendations for state-level changes in law and budgetary decisions that would expand alternatives to jail, safely reduce jail admissions and length of stay, better align state laws with constitutional principles, and provide services and support to crime victims.

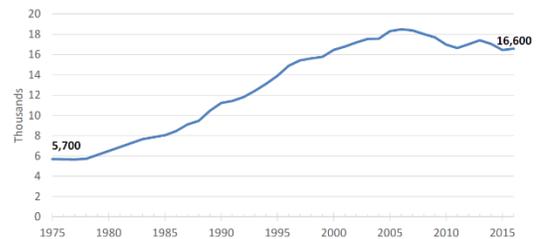
At their first meeting, technical assistance staff from The Pew Charitable Trusts presented initial findings about jail population trends from national data sources and from the Michigan Treasury Department’s county financials dashboard. These will be supplemented in future meetings with data gathered from local jails and courts.

Major Presentation Takeaways:

Michigan jail populations have nearly tripled in the last 35 years.

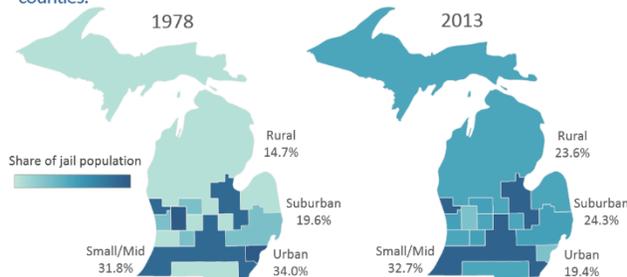
In the 1970s, about 6,000 people were held in Michigan county jails on any given day. By 2016, that number had nearly tripled. Jail incarceration has not followed crime rates. Michigan index crime rates peaked in the early 1980s, and have since reached a 50-year low. The last time the crime rate was this low, in 1960, the jail incarceration rate was a third of what it is today.

The number of people in Michigan jails nearly tripled since the 1970s.



Over the past 40 years, Michigan’s rural counties have experienced significant jail growth. Currently, rural counties hold more people in jail than urban areas.

Rural Michigan counties now hold a larger share of people in jail than urban counties.



Between 1978 and 2013, the federal Census of Jails shows that rural jails increased their share of the statewide jail incarceration by 9% even as the state jail incarceration rate grew dramatically. In 1978, 34 percent of Michigan’s jail population was in urban counties, and only 15 percent was in rural counties. By 2013, the most recent jail census year, rural jails accounted for 24 percent of Michigan’s jail population and the portion in urban jails had shrunk to 19 percent.

In 2017, Michigan counties spent nearly half a billion dollars on corrections and jail costs.

This figure *does not* include any costs related to building or renovation jail facilities. Justice system costs, totaling at over \$2 billion in 2017, were the third largest subcategory of Michigan county expenses. Annual county expenditures on jails are lower than spending on roads and mental health care, but far exceed spending on other stated county priorities such as community and economic development.

In 2017, Michigan taxpayers spent
\$478 million
on county jail and corrections costs.

Background

For several years, Michigan has been making progress on reforms that affect state prisons. Now they're turning their attention to county jails. Jails are different from prisons. Prisons hold people who have been found guilty of felonies, including many who are being removed from society for many years. Jails are temporary holding facilities for people while they await trial, or people serving short sentences for minor crimes. Today, about half of the people in Michigan's local jails are unconvicted and constitutionally presumed innocent while they await trial.

Prisons are paid for by the state while jails are paid for by the counties. However, state laws influence decisions about who is booked into local jails, how long they stay, and why. Over the next several months, the Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration will analyze data related to Michigan's criminal case filings and jail populations; assess Michigan laws, budgetary decisions and county-level practices; and help evaluate how those practices align with legal and constitutional principles. With data-driven policy reform, the Executive Order envisions "easing the burden on county budgets, taxpayers, and citizens by ensuring jail beds are used in targeted ways that promote public safety and economic stability."

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The full data presentation can be found here: <https://courts.michigan.gov/News-Events/Pages/DataDrivenJusticeSolutions.aspx>

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