

LATINO CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY PRIORITIES

Over the course of a two-day Criminal Justice Convening held January 20th - 21st of 2022, the [UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative](#), [LatinoJustice PRLDEF](#), [Drug Policy Alliance](#), and [the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators](#) brought together advocates, academics, and legislators to create the following shared policy agenda that will inform federal, state, and local policy and organizing campaigns that seek to advance criminal justice reform across five major policy areas:

1. Alternatives to Incarceration
2. Crimmigration
3. Drug Decriminalization and Public Health-Oriented Justice
4. Reintegration and Reentry
5. Youth Justice

ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

MISSION STATEMENT: Make sustainable cuts and alternatives to the number of Latinos arrested, convicted, incarcerated, and under government supervision by increasing investments in our communities and changing public discourse on what safety and justice looks like.

- » **Foster a cross-sectoral dialogue between Latino advocates, system-impacted leaders, scholars, government stakeholders, and others to identify Latino-specific goals and objectives for alternatives to incarceration.** Participating stakeholders will maintain continuous communication to collaborate, reflect, review, and benchmark progress.
- » **Synthesize and document state and local models for alternatives to incarceration that serve as best practices for improving justice in Latino communities.** In identifying programs, interventions, and transformations, we will develop a policy campaign that outlines and encourages at least three key jurisdictions to adopt similar models. Models could include but are not limited to [housing alternatives to in-custody sentences](#), [pre-filing diversion programs](#), and [supervised release programs](#).
- » **Elevate best practices and improve public perception of alternatives to incarceration through strategic placement of op-eds, letters to the editor, and media appearances.** As part of a cohesive public education campaign, we will identify and collaborate with a media partner to promote content that showcases how the criminal justice impacts Latinos.

LATINO CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

CRIMMIGRATION

MISSION STATEMENT: Expand human rights to all people who live in the United States, regardless of birth country or history of being criminalized.

- » **Support federal campaigns and legislative measures that seek to eliminate the prison to deportation pipeline** by decriminalizing border crossing, decriminalizing quality of life crimes including drug possession for personal use, creating humane pathways for citizenship, and delinking social welfare programming from documentation status.
- » **Synthesize and elevate state and local jurisdictions and non-profits doing innovative work at the nexus of criminal justice and immigration law.** Our consolidated list will highlight measures that [build trust between Latino and immigrant communities and law enforcement](#), [improve education around civil rights](#), and ensure access to [language-accessible](#) and [culturally-competent](#) resources and information during interactions with the criminal justice or immigration system.
- » **Expand harm reduction policies to include noncitizens.** Partner and collaborate with immigrant rights groups to place OP-EDS and Letters to the Editors, that center immigrant humanity and dignity, and [promote community care models](#) that prioritize the health and social inclusion of immigrants when discussing criminal justice reform.
- » **Support state and federal legislation that would improve data collection of immigration and criminal justice system-impacted Latino residents.** By improving data collection practices, states can better understand the racial disparities within the system and develop racial impact statements that center communities of color when analyzing sentencing laws and practices. Similarly, support policies at the federal level to access federal data and data of non-citizens within the federal carceral system, federal crime data, and Department of Homeland Security/Immigration and Customs Enforcement data to demonstrate the intersectional nature of the carceral and deportation systems in the U.S.

DRUG DECRIMINALIZATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH-ORIENTED JUSTICE

MISSION STATEMENT: Start addressing the harms of the U.S. driven drug war by decriminalizing drug possession and distribution, and increasing access to health resources, such as harm reduction services and evidence-based drug education. Above all, the implementation of these policies will be guided and informed by people with lived experience whose knowledge will help improve the health and stability of our communities.

- » **Support the development of a robust public education campaign that showcases the benefits of drug decriminalization and highlights the harms of the drug war.** The latino-focused campaign will be multilingual, culturally competent, multiracial, and intersectional when outlining the interplay of criminal justice, drug policy, and immigration. Drug decriminalization could significantly reduce the number of people facing collateral and immigration consequences for drug convictions and allow for the resentencing and expungement of prior drug convictions.

DRUG DECRIMINALIZATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH-ORIENTED JUSTICE

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- » **Craft messaging that myth-busts misconceptions and biases about drug use.** Through a [harm reduction model](#), we will validate the humanity and needs of people who use drugs and how the Latino community can better support family members, friends, and loved ones impacted by drug use. The communication campaign will also provide a landscape analysis that provides a Latino lens to how the criminal justice system touches an individual's life and how drug decriminalization can improve access to housing, employment, civic engagement, education, immigration pathways, and more.
- » **Identify and bring together advocates, system-impacted individuals, religious leaders, mothers, celebrities, and immigration/Latino/LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations to serve as trusted messengers on the values and benefits of drug decriminalization.** Leaders would support the development of Latino-specific art and community projects to educate and undue stigmas around drug use.
- » **Scale-up and invest in comprehensive state and local health-oriented models that are culturally responsive to the needs of Latino communities.** This would include but is not limited to supporting community health centers, syringe service programs, overdose prevention programs, and community-based organizations serving as healthcare providers, and expanding [Community Health Workers/Promotores networks](#) to facilitate linkages to primary care, counseling services, and culturally and linguistically relevant treatment options that are evidence-based.

REINTEGRATION AND REENTRY

MISSION STATEMENT: Remove systemic legal barriers that inhibit the formerly incarcerated from economic, social, and political opportunities, and promote a reintegration system that fosters dignity, empowerment, and healing.

- » **Encourage state and federal legislators to champion the removal of probation and parole restrictions that prohibit an individual under supervised release from associating or interacting with a mentor or friend who has been convicted of a felony.** This [restriction](#) should be removed with a pilot state and local mentorship program that would allow formerly incarcerated individuals to advise and support others exiting or still within the carceral system.
- » **Support federal campaigns and policies that would improve healthcare and mental health resources,** including [improving formerly incarcerated individuals' access and use of medical insurance](#), expanding prisoners' current resources to include social workers, and more.
- » **Support state policy efforts to divest from prisons and create habilitation housing centers** that could serve the estimated [5 million formerly-incarcerated individuals](#) currently residing in the U.S. These centers would provide its system-impact residents a sense of safety, community, and accountability amongst like-minded housemates.

REINTEGRATION AND REENTRY

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- » **Amplify and encourage state and local efforts that improve a formerly-incarcerated individual's access to critical resources and employment.** Campaigns and policies include measures to [remove barriers](#) that prevent formerly incarcerated individuals from applying for an ID or Driver's License, restore the [right to vote](#), and [reduce employment discrimination](#) by adopting [Ban the Box legislation](#) that would reconfigure background checks to omit non-violent criminal charges.
- » **Increase public visibility of systems-impacted individuals** by uplifting and promoting more diverse perspectives from previously incarcerated individuals and systems-impacted family members featured in media, policy reform campaigns, and research on reintegration.

YOUTH JUSTICE

MISSION STATEMENT: Embrace community-centered alternatives to youth incarceration that empower Latino youth and foster environments where all youth can realize their full potential.

- » **Uplift state, local, and federal policy campaigns to promote Latino and multiracial history and curriculum for youth.** Adopting curricular programs like [ethnic studies](#) and [eliminating bans on books](#) by non-white authors could play a crucial role in fostering a sense of identity and belonging amongst Latino youth and other students of color.
- » **Develop a pipeline for the strategic placement of op-eds, letters to the editor, and media appearances by Latino youth impacted by the criminal justice system.** As part of a cohesive public education campaign, we will collaborate with community-based organizations and advocacy groups to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about system-impacted youth by uplifting the stories and work of inspiring Latino youth leaders.
- » **Collect and synthesize best practices for state, local, and non-profit models that seek to build a greater sense of community for Latino youth.** This could include but is not limited to local programming to train system-impacted youth as [mentors](#) and [credible messengers](#), pilot [alternative models to youth incarceration](#), and eliminate overly-punitive and discriminatory [zero-tolerance policies](#) in schools.
- » **Advocate for state legislative efforts that reform sentencing and imprisonment practices in the juvenile justice system.** This could include legislation to [seal and expunge juvenile records](#) to improve future employment and educational prospects for Latino youth and to [eliminate youth solitary confinement](#).
- » **Support state legislation to standardize how agencies in the juvenile justice system collect and report racial and ethnic data.** The current [Latinx data gap](#) makes it difficult to accurately calculate the number of Latinx youth in the juvenile and adult criminal justice system. Improving data collection practices will help us identify how many Latinos are impacted by the system and entry points for future reform.