

BENEFITS OF EARNED DISCRETIONARY REENTRY

BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES

Incarceration, especially for long periods, negatively impacts adult family members and loved ones of people who are incarcerated. People who are reunited with their family and loved ones through Earned Discretionary Reentry (EDR) will be less susceptible to these negative circumstances.

Negative Outcomes Reduced:

- Likelihood of divorce or separation and heightened conflict among couples who remain together¹
- Familial economic hardship and material insecurity
 - Loss of income from a family's primary or secondary wage-earner and the accumulation of fines, fees, and legal debts²
 - Financial stress from paying for phone calls and visits with incarcerated loved ones³

BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITIES

The impact that incarceration has on families radiates out into communities.

Negative Outcomes Reduced:

- Cycles of unemployment and crime, which are fueled by high rates of incarceration that amplify existing financial disadvantages in economically marginalized communities and communities of color.
- Petri dishes of disease from overcrowded prisons, which threaten the health of incarcerated people, prison staff, and surrounding communities.
- Ad hoc scrambles during a pandemic to identify and release vulnerable and rehabilitated people for whom there is no regular review system.

Positive Outcomes:

- A regular system to review people who have been incarcerated for two decades or more to assess whether their continued incarceration serves any purpose.
- Safe communities: A 25% reduction in the Illinois prison population would not increase the crime rate.⁴
- Redirection of resources wasted on incarcerating rehabilitated people to programs that genuinely contribute to community health and safety.
- Community contributions from reentering residents, many of whom are eager to give back to their communities and many of whom seek to mentor at-risk youth, which can help break cycles of incarceration and build stronger and safer communities.

1. Kristin Turney, and Rebecca Goodsell, "Parental Incarceration and Children's Wellbeing," *The Future of Children* 28, no. 1 (2018): 151, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26641551>.

2. Ibid, 149; Creasie Finney Hairston, "Focus on Children with Incarcerated Parents: An Overview of the Research Literature," *The Annie E. Casey Foundation* (2007): 15.

3. Hairston, 8.

4. James Austin, Todd Clear, Richard Rosenfeld, "Projecting Illinois Crime Rates and the Impact of Further Prison Population Reductions." *Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation*, https://hfg.org/illinois_crime_forecast.pdf.

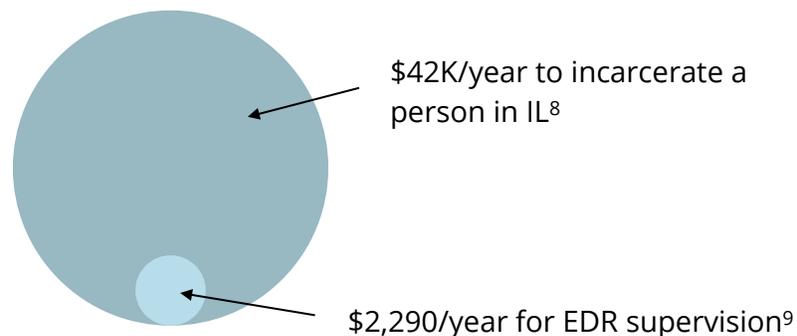
BENEFITS FOR GOVERNMENT

EDR will benefit the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and Illinois judicial system in several ways:

- EDR will incentivize people in prison to behave and pursue rehabilitative programming and use their time constructively, preparing for release.
- EDR will significantly reduce the population of geriatric people in the IDOC by reviewing people's sentences before they become elderly and infirm and need extensive medical and hospice services. This will lead to sizable savings because the cost to incarcerate someone over 50 is double the cost to incarcerate a younger person.⁵
- EDR helps to focus the mission of the IDOC on "promoting positive change in offender behavior," rather than inhumanely warehousing people until their death.⁶
- EDR will reduce the number of appeals and petitions seeking a new trial, sentence, or release filed in Illinois courts by people serving life, de facto life, or long-term prison sentences. When people's only hope of early release is challenging their conviction or sentence, nearly all avail themselves of this opportunity repeatedly. EDR would lessen the burden on the Illinois court system by creating an automatic system of review that would provide people with a clear pathway to a safe return to their community.
- While EDR would increase the workload of the Illinois Prisoner Review Board (IPRB), which would be responsible for conducting EDR hearings, they would see a concurrent freeing up of some capacity due to fewer people filing for executive clemency.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Since Illinois abolished parole in 1978, the Illinois Department of Corrections' budget has ballooned from \$52 million to \$1.5 billion.
- By the time a person has served a 20-year sentence, Illinois has spent over \$850,000 to confine them.
- If the IPRB grants reentry to 19.6% of EDR applicants, the state will save an estimated \$9.8 million in the first year and \$138 million over the next decade.
- Returning residents will pay taxes and contribute to the economy through their employment and economic activity.



EDR IS LOW RISK, HIGH REWARD

- EDR poses few risks while presenting high rewards for families, communities, state government agencies, and Illinois taxpayers.
- EDR will incentivize people serving long sentences to engage in rehabilitative programming to prepare for their eventual return home. Additionally, people who have been incarcerated for more than ten years are less likely to recidivate eight years after release than individuals who have served shorter sentences.¹⁰ Thus, when individuals are considered and approved for release after serving at least 20 years, their release will pose little risk and they will be prepared to safely return and contribute to their communities.

5. ACLU, "The Plight of the Elderly in Prison," <https://www.aclu.org/other/plight-elderly-prison>; "Aging Out," The Vera Institute, <https://www.vera.org/publications/compassionate-release-aging-infirm-prison-populations>.

6. Illinois Department of Corrections, "Mission," <https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/aboutus/Pages/IDOCOverview.aspx>.

7. Parole Illinois, "Cost Data Fact Sheet," <https://paroleillinois.org/2021/01/19/cost-data-fact-sheet/>.

8. Kathy Saltmarsh, cited in the Capital Fax September 16, 2020.

9. James Deen, Budget & Finance Department June 29, 2020.

10. United States Sentencing Commission, "Length of Incarceration and Recidivism," April 2020, https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/research-publications/2020/20200429_Recidivism-SentLength.pdf.