



Nashville Organized for Action and Hope | PO Box 331144 | Nashville, TN 37203

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

### What's the Problem?

- The Davidson County Sheriff's Office houses approximately 1,800 inmates in the Metro Jail at any one time. These inmates overwhelmingly are male, and a majority are African-American.
- 25 percent of inmates are mentally ill; 90 percent need drug and alcohol treatment.
- These incarcerations – 46,000 in all – cost our community about \$64 million annually.
- 65 percent of misdemeanor citation cases in 2013 were related to driver's license issues.
- In 2013, 39 percent of vehicle stops by Metro Police involved African-Americans, though only 28 percent of Nashville residents are African-American.
- More than half of all adult drug arrests in Nashville involve African-Americans (28 percent of residents), despite national studies showing blacks and whites use drugs at similar rates.
- In 2013, 44 percent of MNPS students were African-American, but 72 percent of out-of-school suspensions and 77 percent of expulsions were of African-American students.
- These suspensions and expulsions, including 458 out-of-school suspensions of kindergarteners, overwhelmingly are for nonviolent violations of school rules.

### Why Should We Care?

- Massive numbers of drivers license offenses burden the public defender's office, the district attorney's office and General Sessions staff and create a spiral of poverty due to excessive fines.
- Ex-offenders leaving jail face restrictions on obtaining an ID and finding employment, creating additional hurdles that ultimately land them back in custody.
- School suspension patterns replicate themselves as children grow older. A black male born in 2001 now has a one-in-three chance of going to prison at some point in his life, while a Latino male faces a one-in-six risk of the same fate.

### What Should Be Done?

#### *Economic Justice*

- Develop alternatives to incarceration that incorporate services and training in mental health, addiction, domestic violence, children and youth, and homelessness.
- Use civil enforcement, like tickets, instead of a criminal citation or arrest, when appropriate.
- Strengthen re-entry services to aid persons in getting jobs and housing.

#### *Social Justice*

- Address racial disparities and improve transparency regarding police stops and drug arrests.
- Create a citizen review board to monitor public concerns with the criminal justice system.
- Adopt officer training for de-escalation, cultural awareness and extreme situational awareness.

#### *Juvenile Justice*

- Address racial disparities in school suspensions and referrals to Juvenile Court.
- Establish a problem-solving center for youth issues to provide immediate intervention, assessment and services to keep kids out of the juvenile justice system.
- Establish standardized, appropriate guidelines for school suspensions, and train school resource officers and principals about their roles in making referrals to Juvenile Court.
- Create an automatic trigger for assessment of needs of students who are at-risk of suspension.

