

ISSUE BRIEF VOL. 2 DECEMBER 2018:

## TACKLING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

In light of the historic discrimination against African Americans and people of color in the criminal justice system, Metro IAF has been fighting for equity by harnessing citizen anger in Baltimore, Cleveland, and other areas to change a system that permanently harms hundreds of thousands of African-American, immigrant, and low-income residents in Metro IAF's cities and suburban areas. Metro IAF is dedicated to ending the communities-to-prison pipeline and creating alternatives that invest in people on the front end and ensure they receive a fair chance after being released from prison.

### 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

#### LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND STATEWIDE CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS

##### Four Actions, One Week: 4,500+ Citizens Demand Change on Criminal Justice Reform, Immigration, Health Care, Affordable Housing, Gun Safety and Schools

In Connecticut, **CONNECT** challenged candidates for Governor to commit to supporting "Clean Slate" legislation that would automatically expunge criminal records for formerly incarcerated people who have no further convictions—after three years for those who have been convicted of a misdemeanor and after five years for felony convictions.

In Massachusetts, **GBIO** secured commitments from both Suffolk County District Attorney candidates to support GBIO's issue priorities, which include not charging mandatory minimums, not requesting bail, and improving data collection/transparency.

In Virginia, **VOICE** won commitments from both Governor Northam and Attorney General Herring to lead with VOICE on reforming the Virginia cash bail system and to end the suspension of driver's licenses for people with unpaid court debt. Attorney General Herring released an opinion at the VOICE action deeming Virginia's cash bail system unconstitutional.

In North Carolina, **Durham CAN** won commitments from all judicial candidates to support its criminal justice agenda, including ending cash bail, eliminating court fines and fees, ending the cycle of sending people with mental illnesses to jail and providing interpreters in Court.



## 2018 HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)

### Greater Cleveland Congregations Wins Creation of the Cuyahoga County Civil Rights Division

The Cuyahoga County Civil Rights Division investigates allegations of violations of civil rights and designates an independent prosecutor in cases of use of deadly force by law enforcement, the first in Ohio. Both initiatives are fully operational. So far, three people have been exonerated as a result of GCC's work: Ru-El Sailor and Evin King, who spent 15 and 22 years in prison respectively for murders they didn't commit, and a 16-year old teenage boy who was awaiting sentencing for a wrongful robbery conviction. Over the last two years, GCC also worked with the new Cuyahoga County Prosecutor to reduce overall felony charges by 20%.

### Greater Cleveland Congregations and BUILD work with US Department of Justice To Hold Cleveland and Baltimore Police Accountable

Following the shooting of Tamir Rice by Cleveland Police, Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC) organized successfully to include GCC's recommendations to reform the Cleveland Police Department in the US Department of Justice Consent Decree requiring Cleveland to adopt constitutional policing, internal accountability, community engagement and financial sustainability. After the shooting of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, BUILD was the first organization sought by the Department of Justice to interview for their investigation of the Baltimore Police Department. A federal judge finally approved the Consent Decree fought for by BUILD leaders in 2017.

### CONNECT Wins Commitments on the Use of Police Body Cameras

In Bridgeport, CT, CONNECT leaders demanded de-escalation training and improved racial and cultural sensitivity training for all officers. After early resistance attributed to the cost of data storage, Chief Perez committed unequivocally to getting body cameras for all officers, and to train officers in anti-bias and de-escalation tactics.

### Common Ground Investigation Launched: Possible Racial Profiling by Waukesha County Sheriff Department

Over 75 Common Ground members gathered to hear the disturbing story of Rev. Demetrius Williams of Community Baptist and Rev. John Patterson of Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist church as they explained how a Waukesha Sheriff Deputy turned their appeal for help with a flat tire into a racial profiling incident, guised in the cloak of the 'Standard Policy' of the Waukesha County Sheriff Department, lead by Sheriff Eric Severson. Read Washington Post story [here](#).

### Jersey City Together Wins Data Accountability for "Use of Force" Reports

Investigative reporting by [NJ.com](#) reporters uncovered that Jersey City had "misfiled" a significant number of "use of force" reports and failed to comply with guidance from the state Attorney General. At their December 2018 action, Jersey City Together pressed Mayor Steven Fulop to release data and ensure that this loss of data never happens again, which he committed to do. Within two days of the action, the Jersey City Police Department released another 77 "use of force" reports.

### Illinois Affiliates Win Commitments from All 10 Republican and Democratic Candidates for Illinois Attorney General

United Power for Action and Justice (Cook County), Lake County United, DuPage United, Fox River Valley Initiative (Kane County) won commitments from all 10 Republican and Democratic candidates for Illinois Attorney General. Each candidate agreed to meet with Metro IAF affiliates within 30 days if elected, and they responded to how they would address key issue strategies of the organizations – reducing incarceration of people with mental illness and/or addiction, affordable housing, responding to hate crimes in 24 hours, and disrupting the flow of illegal guns and making guns safer. **Candidates pictured below.**

