

Support HB 1614 (Rep. Slaughter) Raising Illinois Retail Theft Felony Threshold Tackling Crimes of Poverty, Substance Abuse and Mental Health

ILLINOIS HAS A MASS INCARCERATION CRISIS COSTING MILLIONS A YEAR

- ▶ Illinois now has one of the largest and most overcrowded prison systems in the country, with more than **10,000 prisoners in excess** of its design capacity.
- ▶ Half of the state's prison population is serving time for low level offenses that commonly occur as a result of unaddressed issues of poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, and trauma.
- ▶ If enacted into law, HB 1614 would result in a net decrease of 1,100 inmates incarcerated in the Department of Corrections, saving over \$37 million in taxpayer money per year.¹

PENALTIES FOR RETAIL THEFT HAVE NOT KEPT UP WITH INFLATION AND ARE OUT OF STEP WITH MOST OTHER STATES

- ▶ In Illinois, shoplifting an item with a value of just \$300 or more (e.g., a smartphone) is a felony that can result in a prison sentence. Only two states have lower thresholds.

PEOPLE WHO STEAL WOULD STILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE:

- ▶ A Class A misdemeanor conviction carries a penalty of up to a year in jail and a fine up to \$2,500.

FELONY RECORDS: A BURDEN ON COMMUNITIES - INEFFICIENT FOR COMMUNITIES TO THRIVE

Prison is inefficient: Individuals with felony records face challenges to finding housing, employment, and education opportunities. About half of all Illinois prisoners are re-incarcerated within three years after their release.²

HB 1614 would:

- Set the felony threshold at \$2,000 for retail theft and theft; (from \$300 and \$500); and
- Providing that automatic penalty enhancements shall apply only in cases where the person has been previously convicted of a felony (rather than any theft offense).

Examples of State Felony Thresholds	
State	Threshold
Texas	\$2,500
South Carolina	\$2,000
Colorado	\$2,000
Connecticut	\$2,000
Georgia	\$1,500
Alabama	\$1,500
Utah	\$1,500
Montana	\$1,500
Nebraska	\$1,500
Rhode Island	\$1,500
Delaware	\$1,500

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¹ Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform, *Final Report* (Dec. 2016).

² *Supra* note 2.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

ACLU of Illinois

Americans for Prosperity—Illinois

Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI)

Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE)

Chicago Appleseed

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Communities United

Community Renewal Society

Illinois Birth Justice

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)

Illinois Justice Project

Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN)

Juvenile Justice Initiative

Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender

ONE Northside

Restore Justice Illinois

Safer Foundation

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

Social Change

Target Area Development Corporation

United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations (UCCRO)