

## **New Solutions Campaign**

*Promoting Fair & Effective Criminal Justice • Strengthening Families & Communities*

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**To: The Honorable Members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee**

**Date: September 26, 2016**

**Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 1026**

We, the undersigned, express our strong opposition to Senate Bill 1026 and urge you to pull this bill from consideration. Senate Bill 1026 increases penalties for fentanyl distribution. While we recognize the need to prevent opioid use disorders and overdose deaths, increasing penalties on opioid drugs is not the answer.

Over the last three decades, the U.S. prison population has expanded at an unprecedented rate. The engine driving this growth has been the overuse of incarceration for nonviolent drug offenses and mandatory minimum sentencing. The U.S. now has the largest prison population both numerically and per capita in the world. More than 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the United States. One in one hundred adults are now behind bars in the U.S. The U.S. accounts for only five percent of the world's population, but we account for 25 percent of the world's prisoners.

New Jersey's prison growth has kept pace with this national trend. Over the last 30 years, New Jersey's prison population rose from about 8,000 in 1982 to more than 20,000 today. During the same time period, the budget for the New Jersey Department of Corrections grew from \$289 million a year to more than \$1 billion. This budget growth far outstrips all other parts of the state's budget. From 1979 until 2006, the corrections budget grew by a factor of 13 while the overall budget grew only by a factor of six. In the 1980s and 1990s, corrections spending grew at three times the rate of spending on education. It costs more than \$45,000 a year to incarcerate an individual in New Jersey and our state spends about \$330 million a year just to incarcerate drug offenders.

**In addition, these failed policies have had a disproportionate impact on our most vulnerable families and communities. While African Americans and Latinos make up only about 30 percent of New Jersey's population, they make up about 80 percent of those incarcerated for drug offenses.**

**We have spent the last 30 years increasing penalties for drug offenses and this has had no impact on drug use or abuse. Increased penalties are not the answer. We need more treatment beds, not more prison beds. We need to spend our limited resources providing funding for drug treatment, mental health services and other interventions that support and protect our citizens and our communities—not on policies that tear them apart.**

Again we respectfully ask you to pull Senate Bill 1026 from consideration.

Sincerely,

NJ Association on Correction

NAACP-NJ State Conference

Latino Action Network

New Jersey Policy Perspective

Hyacinth AIDS Foundation

Drug Policy Alliance

**over →**

*Sponsored by*

Drug Policy Alliance | 16 West Front Street, Suite 101A, Trenton, NJ 08608  
nj@drugpolicy.org | 609.396.8613 voice | 609.396.9478 fax

**A Drug  
Policy  
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campaign.**

American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey	Morris County Aftercare Center
Westminster Presbyterian Church	Black Lives Matter – Atlantic City
New Jersey Parents Caucus, Inc.	NJ Coalition to End Homelessness
Workmen Devoted To Edifying The Body Of Christ Evangelistic Church	Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of New Jersey
National Organization for Women – NJ	Prison Nation Radio
The Social Responsibilities Council of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood	Campaign to End the New Jim Crow Princeton/Trenton
Education Alliance for Equality in Education	New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
The Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey	American Friends Service Committee Prison Watch
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Saint James AME Church	Integrity House
Freed Women Empowerment Network	Reformed Church of Highland Park
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Food Justice at Trinity Church of Asbury Park	Mothers In Charge-NJ Chapter