



# 2024 Legislative Agenda

## *Summary*

(Oct 24, 2023)

### **Staffing Levels**

MCA believes that good corrections work requires hard work and time. Investments in staff and support services reflects a commitment to public safety, fewer victims, and better neighbors. This has a huge effect throughout all levels of corrections. It is undermining our ability to provide these correctional services in our correctional facilities both at the state and county level. Our institutions need both staff and space to accommodate treatment and programming needs.

The community based correctional services are seeing this same impact from supervising agents to support services both at the governmental level and with private sector community partners. Services to both adults and juveniles are equally affected. Options in less urban areas are critically short.

Pay and retirement benefits including well deserved earlier retirement for those involved in stressful positions is an area that needs attention if we are to attract newer workers into this field and keep those who may otherwise be attracted to jobs that offer higher quality of life benefits.

### **Mental Health and Substance Abuse**

MCA recognizes the critical lack of sufficient community-based mental health treatment options which has resulted in drastic increases in the incarceration of people with mental illness. We need to adequately fund and support mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) services for the incarcerated population, probationers/parolees, and the youth within our juvenile justice system. Of particular importance is how military veterans interact with the criminal justice system. We need to move beyond pilot programs to a system of mental health care when needed.

### **Reentry for Those Involved in the Criminal Justice System**

MCA believes that effective transitioning of justice-involved people back to the community is critical to enhancing public safety and stewarding public funds. Policies supportive of education, housing, employment, behavior change, and mental health are proven ways to reduce recidivism. Too many statutes and policies are non-adjudicated additional punishments that undermine reentry.

The 2022 legislative working group on registration for those charged or convicted of certain crimes highlighted reasonable revisions that need to be considered. Removal of juveniles ages 10-14 from the registry is a clear need while additional limitations on the impact of registration on older juveniles along with limitations of registration periods for both juveniles and adults who have demonstrated lawful behavior for long periods is also called for and appropriate.

Many other non-adjudicated punishments applied to those with a criminal history go far beyond any semblance of public safety. They serve only to destabilize and limit lawful and supportive options for this population. Many of these limitations have been blindly written into statutory exclusions especially in the area of human service employment, housing, and other employment areas. These exclusions historically known as “collateral consequences” need an entire review and more often elimination.

Bringing in the many diverse voices of those who work in this field is necessary to learn what hinders effective public safety practices and what truly helps those in corrections do their jobs to their best abilities.