BUILDING EMPATHY THROUGH EXPERIENCE
Elected Prosecutors’ Pledge to Facilitate Officewide Prison, Jail, and Juvenile Facility Visits
January 2023

“The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.”
– Fyodor Dostoyevsky

In the American justice system, prosecutors play a significant role in if, when, and how we use incarceration. From pretrial detention requests, to charging decisions, to plea bargaining, to sentence length recommendations, prosecutors have profound influence over who ultimately ends up behind bars and for how long. Yet too many prosecutors have never set foot inside the institutions—prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities—where many of their decisions play out. At a time when national, state, and local policymakers and criminal justice stakeholders are considering how to shrink the footprint of the justice system and how we move away from “tough on crime” carceral policies of the past, it is vital for prosecutors to understand the true impact of their decisions and to see firsthand the jails, prisons, and juvenile facilities in their jurisdiction.

We are also keenly aware of the poor conditions of confinement in our nation’s prisons and jails, which are, at best, inadequately equipped to support their intended purpose of rehabilitation. Prisons are often in remote locations that inhibit connection to family, loved ones, and educational and work opportunities, while local jails were not designed to support the lengths of time in which many now remain in them. Too many correctional facilities are unsafe and inhumane. High-profile in-custody deaths have drawn public attention to the way that solitary confinement is too often deployed as a means of maintaining order. Few people behind bars receive the medical and mental health care to which they are constitutionally entitled. And dehumanizing conditions in correctional facilities all too often beget cultures of violence and offer little hope of a successful return to the community.

In short, prisons and jails are often violent and unhealthy places that can leave people, including staff, worse off than when they entered. Recognizing that 95% of people in prisons will return to their communities, we cannot ignore the fact that the conditions we subject people to while detained or incarcerated impact them, their families, and the health and safety of our communities as a whole.

In light of these concerns, we are joining FAMM’s #VisitAPrison challenge, which encourages all state and federal policymakers to visit a prison or jail. The challenge is based on the premise that gaining a better understanding of incarceration through visiting these facilities will increase policymakers’ support for criminal justice reforms.

We are also going a step beyond that challenge! In partnership with Fair and Just Prosecution (FJP), we are building on the #VisitAPrison challenge to reflect the unique and expansive duty and impact of chief prosecutors as both elected officials and criminal justice system leaders.
Specifically, we pledge to:

(a) **Personally visit the facilities**—the local prison, jail, and juvenile facilities—in which individuals prosecuted by our office are detained or sentenced to terms of incarceration;

(b) **Require line prosecutors** in our office to visit the local prison, jail, and juvenile facility in which individuals that they prosecute are detained or sentenced to terms of incarceration;¹ and

(c) Make these expectations part of the **ongoing mandatory training and job expectations** for line prosecutors in our offices, and underscore that this is an integral part of the performance of their duties.

Some of us already embrace these policies and practices in our office; others will be joining this effort. Together, we hope to inspire prosecutors’ offices and policymakers around the nation to take accountability for their actions by more fully understanding what incarceration looks like in our communities. We must recognize that our obligations, and the communities we are sworn to protect, do not stop at the gates of our jails and prisons.

Sincerely,

**Amy Ashworth**  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Prince William County, Virginia

**Diana Becton**  
District Attorney, Contra Costa County, California

**Wesley Bell**  
Prosecuting Attorney, St. Louis County, Missouri

**Buta Biberaj**  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Loudoun County, Virginia

**Alvin Bragg**  
District Attorney, New York County (Manhattan), New York

**Aisha Braveboy**  
State’s Attorney, Prince George’s County, Maryland

**Danny Carr**  
District Attorney, Jefferson County, Alabama

¹ Note that these commitments are being made to the extent consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreements, with the recognition that any provisions in bargaining agreements deemed to be in conflict with these job expectations would govern and override these commitments.
John Choi  
County Attorney, Ramsey County, Minnesota

Darcel Clark  
District Attorney, Bronx County, New York

Dave Clegg  
District Attorney, Ulster County, New York

Shameca Collins  
District Attorney, 6th Judicial District, Mississippi

Laura Conover  
County Attorney, Pima County (Tucson), Arizona

Shalena Cook Jones  
District Attorney, Chatham County (Savannah), Georgia

John Creuzot  
District Attorney, Dallas County, Texas

Benjamin R. David  
District Attorney, 6th Prosecutorial District, North Carolina

Kara Davis  
District Attorney, Gilliam County, Oregon

Satana Deberry  
District Attorney, Durham County, North Carolina

Parisa Dehghani-Tafti  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, Virginia

Michael Dougherty  
District Attorney, 20th Judicial District (Boulder), Colorado

Mark Dupree  
District Attorney, Wyandotte County (Kansas City), Kansas

Matt Ellis  
District Attorney, Wasco County, Oregon

Keith Ellison  
Attorney General, Minnesota
Ramin Fatehi  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, City of Norfolk, Virginia

Kimberly M. Foxx  
State’s Attorney, Cook County (Chicago), Illinois

Glenn Funk  
District Attorney, Nashville, Tennessee

Kimberly Gardner  
Circuit Attorney, City of St. Louis, Missouri

Sarah F. George  
State’s Attorney, Chittenden County (Burlington), Vermont

Sim Gill  
District Attorney, Salt Lake County, Utah

Joe Gonzales  
District Attorney, Bexar County (San Antonio), Texas

Deborah Gonzalez  
District Attorney, Western Judicial Circuit (Athens), Georgia

Eric Gonzalez  
District Attorney, Kings County (Brooklyn), New York

Mark Gonzalez  
District Attorney, Nueces County (Corpus Christi), Texas

Kimberly Graham  
County Attorney, Polk County (Des Moines), Iowa

Jim Hingeley  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Albemarle County, Virginia

Elizabeth K. Humphries  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, City of Fredericksburg, Virginia

Natasha Irving  
District Attorney, 6th Prosecutorial District, Maine

Michael Jackson  
District Attorney, Dallas County, Alabama
Lawrence S. Krasner  
District Attorney, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Rebecca Like  
Prosecuting Attorney, County of Kaua’i, Hawaii

Leesa Manion  
Prosecuting Attorney, King County (Seattle), Washington

Beth McCann  
District Attorney, 2nd Judicial District (Denver), Colorado

Karen McDonald  
Prosecuting Attorney, Oakland County, Michigan

Ryan Mears  
Prosecuting Attorney, Marion County (Indianapolis), Indiana

Brian Middleton  
District Attorney, Fort Bend County, Texas

Stephanie Morales  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Portsmouth, Virginia

Mary Moriarty  
County Attorney, Hennepin County (Minneapolis), Minnesota

Steve Mulroy  
District Attorney, Shelby County (Memphis), Tennessee

Jody Owens  
District Attorney, Hinds County, Mississippi

Joseph Platania  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, City of Charlottesville, Virginia

Dalia Racine  
District Attorney, Douglas County, Georgia

Eric Rinehart  
State’s Attorney, Lake County, Illinois

Jeff Rosen  
District Attorney, Santa Clara County, California
Marian Ryan
District Attorney, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

Jacqueline Sartoris
District Attorney, Cumberland County (Portland), Maine

Eli Savit
Prosecuting Attorney, Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor), Michigan

Mike Schmidt
District Attorney, Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon

Brian Schwalb
Attorney General, District of Columbia

Daniella Shorter
District Attorney, 22nd Judicial District, Mississippi

Eric Sparr
District Attorney, Winnebago County, Wisconsin

Jack Stollsteimer
District Attorney, Delaware County, Pennsylvania

David Sullivan
District Attorney, Northwestern District, Massachusetts

Shannon Taylor
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Henrico County, Virginia

Suzanne Valdez
District Attorney, Douglas County (Lawrence), Kansas

Matthew Van Houten
District Attorney, Tompkins County, New York

Jared Williams
District Attorney, Augusta, Georgia

Todd Williams
District Attorney, Buncombe County (Asheville), North Carolina