



February 2, 2017

Governor Mary Fallin  
Oklahoma State Capitol  
2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Room 212  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

**RE: Oklahoma Justice Reform Task Force Recommendations**

Dear Governor Fallin:

As a leader in Oklahoma's law enforcement community, I write to express my support for the recommendations put forth in the Oklahoma Justice Reform Task Force Report. My experience has shown me that a targeted and appropriate criminal law reform is critical to enhance public safety and cure outdated policies. I believe the recommendations contained in the Oklahoma Justice Reform Task Force Report will accomplish this goal. I appreciate your leadership on and concern for the important criminal justice issues facing our state and country today.

First and foremost, my obligation as a law enforcement officer is to protect public safety. I have dedicated my career to fighting crime and have seen firsthand the toll that lawbreaking takes on communities. I do not hesitate to lock up and punish violent individuals who threaten the safety of my community. However, I have learned much during my tenure about what it means to protect the public. Public safety does not come from locking up every offender. Rather, it comes from smart, targeted policies that lock up the *right* offenders.

Oklahoma has the second highest imprisonment rate in the country. Our prison population has increased by nine percent since 2011 and is projected to grow by an additional 25 percent over the next decade. This has left our prisons and jails dangerously overcrowded. Further, the continued expansion of our prison population is projected to cost the state an additional \$1.9 billion over the next ten years.<sup>1</sup>

To better protect the public, our taxpayer dollars should be spent on arresting, convicting and imprisoning the most serious and violent offenders. Currently, 75 percent of Oklahoma prison admissions are for non-violent crimes. Much of this is driven by Oklahoma's female imprisonment rate – the highest in the nation; 83 percent of female prison admissions were for non-violent offenses.<sup>2</sup> Many of our state's inmates suffer from addiction and mental health disorders, but our prisons and jails are ill-suited treatment centers. Without proper treatment, when these people are

released they are, at best, no better off than then they went in – and often worse. This wastes law enforcement resources and makes us all less safe.

I believe the reforms proposed by the Justice Reform Task Force would be a significant step towards reducing crime and unnecessary incarceration in our state. Key recommendations that will help simultaneously reduce crime, our prison population, and incarceration costs include:

- Increasing the use of alternatives to incarceration by expanding eligibility for drug courts, deferred and suspended sentences, and community sentencing;
- Distinguishing between low-level drug and burglary offenders to better target those that pose a threat to our communities;
- Expanding the safety valve and allowing judges to depart from mandatory minimums where appropriate for non-violent offenders. This would grant judges the discretion to take into account an individual's specific circumstances when deciding his or her sentence length.

I know from experience that we can reduce crime and punish offenders appropriately without relying on excessive and arbitrary punishments. I believe these recommendations represent an important step that will put Oklahoma on track towards achieving this.

I applaud your leadership in advancing these reform recommendations. I look forward to continuing to work with you to strengthen our justice system and make Oklahoma safer.

Respectfully yours,



Keith Humphrey  
Chief, Norman Police Department

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<sup>1</sup> See OKLAHOMA JUSTICE REFORM TASK FORCE, FINAL REPORT 3 (2017).

<sup>2</sup> See OKLAHOMA JUSTICE REFORM TASK FORCE, FINAL REPORT 7,10 (2017).