

# Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council

## Regular Meeting Minutes

June 16th, 2023 10:00AM-11:45AM

*Location: SPAC- Chicago Office Building Conference Room*

*60 E. Van Buren Blvd., 3rd Floor, Room 318*

*Chicago, IL*

**Members Present in Person or by Video-** Delrice Adams, Don Bernardi, John Cullerton (Chair), Lisa Daniels, Mitchell Davis, Anne Fitzgerald, Dough Harvath, Scott Main, Sharone Mitchell, Donald Shelton, Rep. Justin Slaughter, Don Stemen, Augie Torres

**Members Absent-** Ron Hain, Latoya Hughes, Sen. Steve McClure, Marcia Meis, Mary Morrissey, Christelle Perez, Julia Rietz, Sen. Elgie Sims, Rep. Patrick Windhorst

**Non-Members Present in Person or by Video-** Abigail Drumm, Kiera Eckhardt, Victoria Gonzalez, Mark Powers, Kathy Saltmarsh, John Specker

### **Welcome, Introductions & Updates**

Chairperson Cullerton called the forty-second regular meeting of the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council to order at 10:00 a.m. Chairperson Cullerton gave the opening remarks, including a summary of the agenda and overview of the meeting, noting that Executive Director Kathy Saltmarsh would be retiring at the end of the month, there would be a vote to confirm Victoria Gonzalez as Executive Director of SPAC, and that there is a remaining retired judge vacancy on the SPAC board.

### **Introduction of New Members**

Chairperson Cullerton then introduced SPAC's new council members. New representation from Champaign County is Julia Reitz, the Champaign County State's Attorney. Now representing the Illinois Prisoner Review Board is Donald Shelton, who replaces Edith Crigler. SPAC has a retired judge vacancy to replace Stu Palmer, who stepped down in November 2022.

### **Executive Director's Report & Farewell**

Kathy Saltmarsh recounted her experience as the first Executive Director of SPAC.

- SPAC was created in 2009, she was hired in July 2010
- There was no budget at its creation; grants through ICJIA covered her position and others
- SPAC came in at a time when policy discussions were beginning to be more data-driven
- Emphasized that it took 7-8 years to go from civil tickets to cannabis legalization
- Bringing the perspective of victims and the restorative justice voice from the perspective of victims to SPAC

### **Vote: Approval of the meeting minutes from the December 2022 SPAC meetings**

Chair John Cullerton moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Rep. Justin Slaughter. The minutes from the December 2022 SPAC meetings were approved by unanimous voice vote.

### **Vote: To confirm hiring of Victoria Gonzalez as Executive Director of SPAC**

Chair John Cullerton moved to vote for Victoria Gonzalez as the new Executive Director of SPAC, seconded by Rep. Justin Slaughter. Victoria Gonzalez was confirmed as the new Executive Director of SPAC by unanimous voice vote.

**Victoria Gonzalez (Executive Director of SPAC)** -- Victoria is the first Executive Director of the Nevada Department of Sentencing Policy. She had served as the Deputy Legislative Council and drafted criminal law legislation prior to her work with the Nevada Sentencing Commission. She served for three years in the Clark County School District and is a graduate of law school from the University of Wisconsin. She has a Master's degree in Education, as well as a Bachelor's from the University of Utah.

### **Overview of SPAC Members' Role in the System**

*Mark Powers, SPAC Research Director* presented a flow chart of a typical felony case in Cook County, including how SPAC members fit into the system and what role they play.

*Abigail Drumm, SPAC Research Analyst* and *John Specker, SPAC Senior Research Analyst* shared how SPAC fits into the policy process, including SPAC's role in evaluating and implementing policies.

The members then discussed potential changes, legislative and not, to make it easier to obtain accurate statistics. *Abigail Drumm, SPAC Research Analyst* recommended SPAC talking to actors in the criminal legal system about their data processes, as well as a comprehensive state-wide system for data collection. *John Specker, SPAC Senior Research Analyst* discussed AOIC's initiative to build a state-wide pretrial case management system, and that the biggest issue with data in Cook County is that it is not digitized.

*Rep. Justin Slaughter* asked the question of: What does this data cost? While *Don Shelton, Chairperson of the Prisoner Review Board* inquired, that because their organization uses data to make their decisions: How relevant is the data that is being collected? *Augie Torres, Reading Between the Lines* gave an example of how data is inaccurate, stating that they had an employee whose college credits while incarcerated were not transferable to a university upon release because his social security number was incorrect in the system. *Anne Fitzgerald, Office of the Cook County Sheriff* shared that the Sheriff's Office in Cook County has their own research department, making it easier to navigate these data issues.

### **Public Comment**

*Robin (Public)* provided that they felt those who suffer loss and victims were not being considered in the conversation and that longer sentences do deter crime.

*Council Member Augie Torres* responded that research has shown individuals age out of crime and there is a decline in recidivism after an individual has served 10 years in prison.

*Council Member Rep. Justin Slaughter* responded with research from other states showing how people desist from crime as they age. He then provided feedback that legislators need to collaborate with citizens and their electorate as well as allow space for victims of crime to have a voice in how legislation evolves.

*Rick (Public)* commented on the Resentencing Task Force report and disagreed with the recommendations provided.

*Director Kathy Saltmarsh* responded that the Resentencing Taskforce is a different body from SPAC.

*Council Member Lisa Daniels* responded by stating her role as a victim representative on SPAC and that there are entities from the survivor community that address the needs of that community.

*Samantha (Public)* thanked Director Saltmarsh for her service to Illinois.

### **New Business**

Proposed meeting dates on the third Friday in June, September, and November conflict with the AOIC Conference of Chief Circuit Judges. The board will consider adjusting the meeting schedule, as well as meeting in Springfield during session to have more interaction with legislators.

### **Adjournment**

Chair John Cullerton moved to adjourn the forty-second regular meeting of the Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, seconded by Rep. Justin Slaughter. The forty-second regular meeting of the Sentencing Policy Advisory Council was adjourned at 11:45am by unanimous voice vote.