

# **Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council**

## **Regular Meeting Minutes**

**September 19, 2025 10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

*Location: Michael A. Bilandic Building and Virtual*

*160 N La Salle St, Chicago, IL 60601. Room N502*

*Chicago, IL*

### **Members Present in Person**

Chair John Cullerton, Scott Main, Steven Fruth, Mitchell Davis, Latoya Hughes, Jim Montgomery, Marcia Meis

### **Members Present by Video**

Doug Harvath, Representative Patrick Windhorst, Don Stemen, Delrice Adams, Representative Justin Slaughter, Annie Chambers, Elizabeth Leahy, Senator Elgie Sims, Lisa Daniels

### **Members Absent**

Julia Reitz, Christelle Perez, Ron Hain, Sharone Mitchell, Senator Steve McClure, Augie Torres

### **Non-Members Present in Person**

Victoria Gonzalez, Mark Powers, John Specker, Michael Varrige, Laura Davis, Paula Wolff, Ben Ruddell, Skylar Waddington, Jayson Cayanan, Jose Sepulveda, Renagh O'Leary, Patricia Jjemba, Natashee Scott, Taylor Holzman, Dan Hunt

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

Chair Cullerton called the forty-sixth regular meeting of the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council (SPAC) to order at 10:00 a.m. Chair Cullerton welcomed SPAC's members and staff along with members of the public. Chair Cullerton then reviewed the agenda stating that there would be a vote to approve the July meeting minutes followed by a SPAC presentation titled Aging Dynamics of the Prison Population. Chair Cullerton then asked SPAC's Executive Director Victoria Gonzalez to take the roll. With a quorum present, Chair Cullerton moved to the next agenda item.

### **Vote: Approval of the Minutes from the July 2025 Meeting**

Chair Cullerton called for a motion to approve the minutes from SPAC's July 2025 Meeting. Councilmember Montgomery moved to approve the minutes from the July 2025 meeting, Councilmember Main seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

### **Aging Dynamics of the Prison Population**

Chair Cullerton introduced Director Gonzalez, SPAC's Research Director Mark Powers, SPAC's Communications & Government Affairs Advisor John Specker, and Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Wisconsin Renagh O'Leary for a presentation titled Aging Dynamics of the Prison Population. This presentation covered trends in the prison population presenting data specific to different age cohorts both in Illinois and nationally. The panelists focused on a notable increase in the prison population for people ages 55 and up while there has been a sharp decline in the prison

population for younger age groups. Professor O’Leary noted the unique challenges that are posed by this older population including the healthcare costs associated with providing adequate care for these people, the challenges that aging prison infrastructure pose, and the unique challenges this population faces during reentry. Professor O’Leary also noted that the younger generations could benefit from the advancing societal understanding of brain science as well as criminal justice reforms. Mr. Powers noted characteristics of the population including that many of the older people in prison were sentenced for serious crimes like murder and criminal sexual assault. Mr. Powers also noted that there are substantial decreases in crime rates and admissions for the younger population compared to previous generations.

Panelists noted specific changes in Illinois law, such as Truth in Sentencing, that lead to the growing population of older people. The panelists discussed the current landscape that provides these individuals with a pathway to release and legislative proposals that have attempted to address these issues, including the Joe Coleman Act and youthful parole. The presentation also highlighted some specific issues around reentry that are necessary to consider when addressing this population, including difficulty being admitted to assisted living homes, difficulty adjusting to technology, and that jobs available to people reentering society from prison can be labor intensive.

Following the presentation, Councilmembers asked the panelists questions. Councilmember Davis asked a question about how the Illinois Department of Corrections allocates resources for reentry. Councilmembers discussed this question and determined it could make a good topic for a future meeting. Further Councilmember questions involved clarifications from the presentation. Councilmember Main commented that when discussing Truth in Sentencing it is important to remember that it has not gone as predicted.

### **Public Comment**

A member from the public had a question about what kind of crimes constitute violent crimes for this presentation. Mr. Powers explained that violent crimes refers to homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, criminal sexual assault, and aggravated assault. Another member of the public asked if SPAC done anything to examine the impact of age on sentencing. Mr. Powers responded by saying that the actual age at sentencing does not seem to have much of an impact, rather criminal history would have the biggest impact. A third member of the public was interested in the growing population of people in the 55 plus group who are entering prison at age 55 and over and she sought data that reflects how many of those people had been previously incarcerated. Mr. Powers responded by saying SPAC can determine how many times older people had been in prison and whether it was for a new admission or a technical violation.

Director Gonzalez read a public comment related to the Joe Coleman Act. Councilmember Montgomery mentioned changes that recent legislation made to the Joe Coleman Act including adding commissioners to the Prisoner Review Board and allowing virtual hearings. Representative Windhorst asked if there was any value in breaking up the 55 plus age group into smaller increments

and Mr. Powers responded that it was possible but at the higher age brackets there are very few people to study. Representative Windhorst also commented that Truth in Sentencing is a popular policy and that was important to consider when discussing reforms.

### **New Business**

SPAC's final meeting of 2025 will take place on November 21, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

### **Adjournment**

Councilmember Hughes moved to adjourn. Councilmember Davis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.