

Congressional Hearing: “California Criminal Justice Reform: Potential Lessons for the Nation”

Talking Points

Women Organizing Reentry Communities of Color - Prop 47

The following observations represent the efforts of the **Women Organizing Reentry Communities of Color - Prop 47 Network** regarding California’s implementation of The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act (Prop 47), and its impact on re-entry efforts of formerly incarcerated women of color.

(If possible, ask the women to stand)

Read:

- **Women Organizing Re-entry Communities of Color – Prop 47 (WORCC-Prop 47) Network** unites **Justice Now, A New Way of Life, and Time for Change Foundation** to ensure that Prop 47 resources account for the needs of women of color returning to their families and communities.
- Passed in November 2014 CA voters passed Prop 47 changing six low-level offenses from felonies to misdemeanors.
- Prop 47 saves the state millions of dollars in reduced incarceration. To-date, those savings amount to approximately \$199 million.
- Despite the historic nature and momentum generated by Prop 47, the promise of this important policy falls short for women of color struggling to reunite their families after incarceration
- As primary custodians of our families, we require multiple pathways to generate income and achieve financial stability that considers the unique conditions of women inside and outside of incarceration including trauma and stigma

We would like to share lessons for the Nation’s policymakers to consider.

- **First, include gender at the onset of policy development.**
Seek input and perspectives of women with lived experiences to produce and implement policies that are gender-responsive

- **Target resources for women of color to access employment and other streams of income.**

Creating access to financial stability is a key factor to build resilience, prevent recidivism, and prevent youth from the prison pipeline.

- **Build data systems and collection into policies to promote transparency and accountability and inform decision-making and use of resources.**

When women of color are not counted, they become invisible.

Thank you and we hope that our findings about the gaps and opportunities to improve the implementation of Prop 47 in California will help to inform your thinking about the importance of gender in justice reform efforts nationally.