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Press Release

Publication Highlights False Choice between Crime Victims' Needs and Corrections Reform

Portland, Oregon — In a bold call to public safety stakeholders, Partnership for Safety and Justice is releasing a new publication, *Moving Beyond Sides: The Power and Potential of a New Public Safety Policy Paradigm*.

Moving Beyond Sides examines some of the key factors shaping the state and federal criminal justice systems over the past 25 years, most notably the widespread adoption of tough-on-crime policies, such as mandatory minimum sentences and three-strikes laws. This has created a colossal growth in the use of prisons. The United States now leads the world in incarceration with just 5% of the world's population but 25% of the planet's prison population.

The dramatic increase in the use of incarceration has come at a cost, especially to states. In order to meet skyrocketing prison budgets, states have shifted large amounts of public resources away from investing in education, the social safety net, and other parts of the public safety system, including services to help crime victims find safety and rebuild their lives.

A growing movement of crime victim advocates is highlighting the false choice between meeting victims' needs and passing sentencing reform to address bloated and ineffective prison spending.

This dynamic is clearly seen in Oregon. In 2010, when Oregon's department of corrections budget ate up almost seven out of every 10 of the state's public safety dollars, nearly 23,000 requests for emergency shelter from violence went unmet because the state's domestic violence shelters lacked the necessary funding and capacity.

"The tragedy of so many people struggling to flee abuse and protect their children being turned away from help represents a public safety system out of balance," says Kerry Naughton, victim advocate and co-author of *Moving Beyond Sides*. ***"In Oregon, advocates who work daily to address domestic and sexual violence are advocating for a more balanced approach to public safety, recognizing that safe and sensible sentencing reform is a viable strategy to reign in a prison budget out of control."***

The perception that there is a conflict between crime victims' needs and corrections reform was shaped by a small but vocal group of tough-on-crime-oriented crime victims. While these victim advocates have not represented the perspective of the majority of people harmed by crime—women, low income communities, and communities of color—they have provided policymakers with the emotional momentum needed to pass tough sentencing laws framed by the politics of fear and punishment.

“The sad irony is that while tough-on-crime-oriented victim advocates want to make sure that what happened to them doesn’t happen to anyone else, the national research shows that tough-on-crime policies are not the smartest or the most cost-effective ways to reduce crime and victimization,” says Naughton.

David Rogers, criminal justice reformer and co-author of *Moving Beyond Sides*, notes: *“A core barrier in fixing America’s failing criminal justice system is a deep divide among stakeholders that has locked up policy conversations.”*

There is a long history of both real and perceived tensions between criminal justice groups focused on addressing the problems with mass incarceration and advocates focused on strengthening crime victims' assistance and rights.

“The status quo approach to criminal justice policy is benefitting no one,” says Rogers. *“We need to look at common ground and our publication Moving Beyond Sides provides strategies and a vision for breaking the gridlock.”*

The paper puts the growth of the victim assistance field in an important context while dispelling the myth that tough-on-crime-oriented victim advocates represent the perspectives of the majority of people most impacted by crime and violence.

Moving Beyond Sides thoughtfully challenges each field to develop a more holistic vision for change, highlighting the research about the most effective ways to reduce crime.

Rogers says, *“We can simultaneously reduce our over-reliance on incarceration, improve public safety outcomes, and strengthen the support systems and services for people harmed by crime. We need to embrace a new public safety policy paradigm.”*

Moving Beyond Sides: The Power and Potential of a New Public Safety Policy Paradigm can be found at www.safetyandjustice.org.

It is a publication of Partnership for Safety and Justice (PSJ), a statewide advocacy organization in Oregon that works to make the state's approach to public safety more effective and more just. PSJ works with everyone most impacted by crime and the criminal justice system: survivors of crime, people convicted of crime, the families of both, and system stakeholders.

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