



1223 Turner St, Lansing, MI 48906 | www.michigancollaborative.org

August 27, 2018

Dear Governor Snyder and Director Washington,

The Steering Team of the Michigan Collaboration to End Mass Incarceration (MI-CEMI) applauds your leadership in the decision to close Ojibway Correctional Facility.

We understand this was not any easy decision.

As a Collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to depopulating prisons in Michigan, we support the focus on rehabilitation and education the Department has taken in the last few years. We know that these efforts come with the coordination of many moving parts. The work to get the population down from 51,000 to 39,000 in a large, ever-shifting bureaucracy is not an easy mountain to climb.

We believe, wholeheartedly, that this multi-dimensional, complicated work is beginning to have deep impact on the once over-bloated population through the following MDOC led initiatives:

- The resourcing and establishment of Vocational Villages,
- The hard work toward higher parole rates,
- The decisions to provide programming and help to parolees instead of technical parole violation returns to prison,
- And, the attention being paid to the lifer population and other vulnerable populations

The Collaboration's Steering Team also understands the heavy impact that this decision will have on the local community of Gogebic County and other surrounding Upper Peninsula communities (as people already drive far distances to their jobs at Ojibway prison). We trust that the state will dedicate resources to job training and educational opportunities for the men and women who are not reabsorbed into the civil service work force.

We understand that this decision was not made in a vacuum. We respect the thought and planning that went into it and also understand the obstacles and financial burdens inherent in trying to run a prison on the far Western end of the Upper Peninsula—transportation, difficulty filling open positions with mental health care and health care providers (this is about worker shortage not quality of services from current providers), and hardship on families (to name a few). In July of 2017, Ojibway processed 333 visitors. Whereas, Handlon a downstate prison—

still out of the way for many folks but much closer to Southeastern Michigan and the urban center of Kent county—processed 1057 visitors in that same month.

The MI-CEMI Steering Team fully supports this closure and looks forward to working with the state in the future to help further the depopulation efforts that are underway.

Sincerely,
The MI-CEMI Steering Team

John Cooper,
Safe & Just Michigan

Mark Fancher,
ACLU of Michigan

Natalie Holbrook,
American Friends Service Committee

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Nation Outside

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