

February 13, 2020

We are elected prosecutors from states, counties and cities - large and small - who spend every day trying to make our communities safer and healthier. We hold our jobs because our communities put us in them after we promised a different and smarter approach to justice, one grounded in evidence-based policies that lift people up while prioritizing the cases that cause real harm. We know that past decades of promoting a “war on drugs” or sending people to prisons and jails because of poverty or unpaid fees has destroyed lives and diverted limited resources away from serious crimes that truly impact communities. We’ve read the research, and we believe in following the evidence. We don’t resort to fear, we deal in facts.

Sadly, we are perceived as a threat by some who are wedded to the status quo or, even worse, failed policies of past decades. Critics such as Attorney General William Barr seek to bring us back to a time when crime was high, success was measured by how harsh the punishment was, and a fear-driven narrative prevailed. This is the same Attorney General who in the span of 24 hours attacked reform-minded, elected District Attorneys for being soft on crime, while demanding his own federal prosecutors lighten the punishment for an ally of his boss. He touts the importance of the rule of law, yet undermines it in the same breath.

We will not go back to the fear-driven “tough on crime” era. We will not adhere to policies that failed to make our communities safe and punished poverty, mental illness or addiction— policies that filled prison beds and made our country an international outlier in our rate of incarceration. We will not cater to the powerful and wealthy while plundering the poor and communities of color. We will continue to implement solutions that are proven, focus our resources on solving serious crimes, and work to reduce our nation’s bloated incarceration system. We will uphold the rule of law, and we will apply it fairly.

We know policies based on fear don’t work; they simply deepen divides and promote a false narrative. For too long communities were told that locking up poor people for crimes like shoplifting and drug possession would make them safer, when time and time again all it resulted in was the fracturing of families, intergenerational cycles of incarceration, a destabilization of communities and a growing distrust of law enforcement.

In fact, we are now safer than we’ve ever been. In Chicago, where Kim Foxx has prioritized gun violence prosecutions, [homicides and shootings](#) are down for the third year in a row. In Baltimore, [Marilyn Mosby](#) chose to do something about a high unsolved homicide rate – putting more of her office’s precious resources to solving these cases and prioritizing dangerous crimes over arresting and prosecuting marijuana users. In Boston, Rachael Rollins is [leading an initiative](#) to revisit hundreds of unsolved homicide cases, rather than spending time on prosecuting low level offenses that have propelled racial disparities.

Every day we are striving to make our communities safer and healthier – and looking to smart, evidence-based and fiscally sound strategies in doing so. When we stop spending scarce

resources on marijuana cases, we have a greater ability to investigate homicides. When we aren't testing for the presence of THC, we can use our labs to process untested sexual assault kits. When we aren't spending billions to build new prisons and jails, we can invest in the potential of our young people and ensure a quality education with open doors of opportunity for the next generation. We can prioritize things that cause harm and provide resources to our victims and those most in need of support.

We also recognize that some things can't be solved by the criminal legal system, and we are rolling up our sleeves to partner with our communities to solve these problems. This includes working with others to enhance mental health services (rather than turning our jails into mental health institutions), promoting harm reduction approaches and safe injection sites that will stem the tide of overdose deaths, and supporting efforts to build affordable housing that can help address homelessness. *These* are the solutions that will keep us safe. Not stop-and-frisk or fearmongering rhetoric and attacks.

This is our vision of safety and justice. And it is working. We will not return to the days where the powerful and the corrupt walk free while the poor languish in a jail cell – despite attempts by some to bring us there. We will not deepen the divide and distrust between law enforcement and communities of color. The voters and our communities demanded better, and so do we.

Signed,

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