We are the unbiased source about what is happening behind Pennsylvania prison walls.
“I am writing to you because there are things being done to us that is wrong and I need your help.”

“Philly jails release scores of inmates without returning their IDs, cash or phones.”
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, AUGUST 2019

“Delco Prison goes without air-conditioning during 100-degree heat waveatures.”
DELCO DAILY TIMES, JULY 2019

“Breakfast is served to Dauphin County prisoners at 3:30 a.m. Lunch follows at 9:30 a.m. And supper is served at 2:30 p.m.”
PENN LIVE PATRIOT NEWS, SEPTEMBER 2019

“For Pennsylvania, 2019 is on track to be the worst year in at least a generation for suicides in state prisons.”
YORK DAILY RECORD, OCTOBER 2019
2019 was a year of extraordinary gains—bringing light to the inside and the darkness on the inside to light. Your support enabled us to expose institutional cruelties and to step in and stop human suffering. We helped thousands of families stay connected. With our affiliates, we raised awareness and advocated for the end of life sentences and solitary confinement. We inspired more people to show love above bars and put an end to the culture of punishment. We couldn’t have done any of it without you. Thank you for standing with us.
Our Mission

To advocate for humane prisons and a rational approach to criminal justice.
Letter from Executive Director

There are times of catalytic change in history. May 1787 was one of those moments.

May 8, 1787, just weeks away from the start of the Constitutional Convention, our nation’s founders established the Pennsylvania Prison Society out of the conviction, that “[t]he obligations of benevolence are not canceled by the follies or crimes of our fellow creatures.”

That moment and their words still inspire us today. But this is a very different catalytic moment.

Mass incarceration is the civil and human rights crisis of our time. In 1980, there were 16,000 Pennsylvanians living in state and county prisons. Today there are 76,000. That’s more than a 5-fold increase.

Mass incarceration has meant that the way we do things as an organization is all out of proportion to the number of people on the inside. And so, we are modernizing and growing. This is a massive endeavor that is only possible thanks to the generosity and commitment of each Society supporter. Much as our founders were revolutionaries, creating a democracy, envisioning a restorative criminal justice system, so are you today.

At our core, the Prison Society is just that, a Society, a group of people who have come together to form a community. A community dedicated to the proposition that all among us are entitled to a life of dignity and caring—regardless of commission of crime, mistakes, or poverty. A community that believes that the criminal justice system should restore hope and the possibility of a life of virtue and happiness, not dash hope and end lives. We are a community dedicated to extending compassion to those living behind prison walls because we know it benefits us all.

I am honored to be connected to so much good—to collectively create so much impact. And I am excited beyond belief to see all that is still to come.

With your support, our moment is now.

CLAIRE SHUBIK-RICHARDS
Executive Director
“We have the unique ability to know people while they are incarcerated and when they come home.”

—KIRSTIN CORNELL, SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR
How We Work

Your support of the Prison Society helps us make Pennsylvania more just and humane. Together we:

Stop the culture of punishment
We shine a light on the dark world of prisons to eradicate abuse and inhumane treatment. Prison Society volunteers provide public witness to what happens behind prison walls. Written into Pennsylvania law, the Society has the unique ability to go into correctional facilities, meet with incarcerated people and provide real-time information on prison conditions. We are vital advocates for humane conditions and for human rights. Every month, more than 250 incarcerated people and their families ask Society volunteers for help with issues they face inside prison.

Care for those impacted by incarceration
Hundreds of thousands of people return from prisons to Pennsylvania communities each year. We help make that difficult transition easier by providing critical social supports to people coming home and their families. We keep families together by providing subsidized transportation for loved ones with incarcerated family members hours away from home and by facilitating parenting classes for incarcerated fathers. Our mentoring program provides a stable, continuous connection that bridges life behind bars and life in the community.

Fight for reform, build understanding and awareness
Mass incarceration is the civil and human rights challenge of our time. Many Pennsylvanians likely don’t know or care about this crisis, but they should. This ignorance is not necessarily willful, but rather due to limited access to the experiences of those behind prison walls. That’s where the Prison Society makes a difference. We reach people across the state and across the country with our message of justice and compassion for incarcerated individuals and their families through our website, social media platforms, publications, and events for concerned citizens.

We drive important conversation on prison conditions and frame the debate about how incarcerated individuals should be treated. Where our laws are flawed and outrageous, we fight to change them.
What We Do

“The Prison Society has the ability to be the unbiased source of truth. We are desperately needed. And we have so much more we need to do.”

—JOSH ALVAREZ, Prison Monitoring Director

SERVICES

● Our **responsive staff** answers more than 250 calls, emails, and letters every week from incarcerated people and their families seeking help and/or information.

● Our **volunteers** monitor prison conditions, providing outside eyes and ears behind prison walls. They elevate issues to prison officials, assist incarcerated people with self help, communicate with concerned family members, and provide a much needed social connection to those cut off from family and friends.

● Our **transportation services** keep families on the outside connected to loved ones on the inside. Every month we send 10 buses across the state with over 2,400 riders annually.

PROGRAMS

● Our **mentors** serve as a bridge between life behind bars and life in the community. They help incarcerated participants prepare for life outside prison walls and provide ongoing support when mentees are reunited with their communities and face all of the new challenges that can bring.

● Our **fatherhood classes** help fathers gain the critical skills and emotional readiness needed to successfully reconnect with their families once they are released.

PUBLICATIONS

● **Graterfriends** is our publication for and by incarcerated people, focusing on the issues that they care about.

● **Beyond Bars** is a monthly digest of news regarding prison conditions and gives an inside look at what’s going on at the Society.

Become a member to start receiving Graterfriends and Beyond Bars. Join online at [www.prisonsociety.org](http://www.prisonsociety.org)
Top Victories for 2019

We sounded the alarm on the expansion of life sentences
In Partnership with The Sentencing Project, we raised awareness of the expansion of life sentences in America and argued against such extreme punishments. In conjunction with Lifers Incorporated, the organization of people serving life sentences in Pennsylvania, we hosted a panel at the State House on the need for people serving life sentences to be eligible for parole board review.

We played a crucial role in getting the story out about outrageous discharge practices in Philadelphia jails
After an investigative report by Pranshu Verma and the Philadelphia Inquirer, The Philadelphia Department of Prisons listened and has now committed to releasing people earlier in the day and with their belongings. Tom Innes, our Board President, was a key player in putting an end to the decades-long practice of the Philadelphia jail releasing people without their belongings.

We made sure lawmakers heard our message loud and clear
Alongside allied organizations, we kicked off the legislative session by speaking with legislative leaders and senior staff about key criminal justice issues. We were featured at the first meeting of the bi-partisan caucus on criminal justice reform and testified before the Democratic Policy Committee.

We launched new partnerships that will help us tackle important criminal justice issues together
Carnegie Mellon’s Center for Human Rights Sciences and Temple’s Klein College of Media partnered with us to provide research and media support that allows us to clearly and powerfully show the impact of mass incarceration on Pennsylvania. Urban Rural Action, and the Vera Institute joined forces to help us engage county policy makers about what they can do to ameliorate over-incarceration and inhumane conditions.

We doubled our staffing capacity
We’ve more than doubled our staff over the past year giving us more bandwidth to serve our community more effectively and to tackle the urgent issue of criminal justice reform.
Growing old in prison involves fighting for health care from a system that is often overtaxed and uncaring, or even worse, life-threatening.

Joan Porter is a longtime member of the Prison Society Board of Directors and an active volunteer. She is a champion for a compassionate release, the Pennsylvania law that lets terminally ill incarcerated people die at home.

With the assistance of legal counsel, Joan has repeatedly aided families in navigating this cumbersome process. Recently, Joan helped Ellen, an incarcerated woman with terminal cancer. After serving decades in prison, Ellen was able to reunite with her family and lived for almost a full year in the care of her children. The impact was profound—not just for Ellen—but for her once estranged family that was brought back together by the experience. As much as it is about the dying individual, compassionate release can also bring great healing to family and community.

Sadly, many who are terminally ill are unable to successfully access the labyrinthine and lengthy compassionate release process. Through the gift of her time and dedication, Joan has helped many elderly incarcerated people with life-threatening conditions spend their last months and days at home.

“I am involved with the Prison Society because it’s the right thing to do. It’s as simple as that.”

Meet Joan
As an organization, we have made great strides over the past few years in terms of financial stability. Our ability to expand our donor network while better utilizing state funding sources creates a bright future for the society and ensures our ability to continue the good work we do.”

—Chris Covington, Treasurer
Donors

The Prison Society accepts every gift with gratitude. We can’t do this without your steadfast support.

With each contribution, you too have been a source of light and love on the dark world of prisons.

*Donor listed have given $40 dollars or more.

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We care because incarceration affects us all...

“Half of all American adults have an immediate family member who has served time in prison or jail.” Today, one percent of Pennsylvania’s adult population lives behind bars.

I care because … I want to be part of the solution that heals a broken system.

I care because … Prison and criminal justice reform is the most important human rights issue of our time.

I care because … Our system is shattered, broken, and barbaric. Instead of giving people mercy and reflection, our prisons often encourage people to become more callous, more hardened, more dangerous. It frightens me.

I care because … People don’t stop being people just because they are in jail.

I care because … The power to see people beyond their paths is a gift. To see the possibilities and potential of people, and to help their get there, is truly important.

I care because … Our impact is measurable. Tangibly the lives of inmates and their families are better because of us.

If you care, too, please show your support with a donation https://pps.kindful.com/ or return the enclosed envelope.

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“Their leadership on the board has been invaluable. He brings his own personal commitment to the cause combined with his unique leadership style. He continues to be an inspiration for the board.”

—DAVID DAVIS, Board Vice President