

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO.104

Reps. Dievendorf, Edwards, Martus, Miller, Byrnes, Hill, Paiz, Morgan, Coffia, Hope, Steckloff, Neeley, O'Neal, McFall, Hoskins, Brenda Carter, Young, Puri, Haadsma, Tyrone Carter, Glanville, Brixie, MacDonell, Wegela, Wilson, Andrews, McKinney, Brabec, Tsernoglou, Rheingans, Scott and Farhat offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to declare May 2023 as National Prisoner Family
2 Month in the state of Michigan.

3 Whereas, Families of the incarcerated deserve to have the
4 necessary information to advocate and stay connected with their
5 loved one while they are inside the prison system, allowing them to
6 be more supportive once their loved one returns home; and

7 Whereas, The Michigan Department of Corrections has created a

1 Family Reunification Policy to ensure incarcerated individuals are
2 able to interact with their family throughout their term of
3 incarceration and acknowledge families represent a key pillar of
4 success during incarceration and post-release as individuals return
5 to their communities; and

6 Whereas, The department acknowledges the importance of working
7 constructively with families as a part of its larger mission; and

8 Whereas, A number of policies and procedures of the criminal
9 legal system and prison system are harmful and build walls between
10 families and prevent family inclusion; and

11 Whereas, Families of the incarcerated recognize the
12 intersecting systems of oppression and stigma that silence the
13 voices of legal impacted families, particularly people of color,
14 children, women, people with disabilities or mental illness, and
15 people with diverse genders and sexualities; and

16 Whereas, Not only does parental incarceration increase a
17 child's risk of living in poverty, it also elevates risk for school
18 problems, mental health diagnoses, family disconnection, drug and
19 alcohol use and delinquent behavior; and

20 Whereas, African American children and Latino children are at
21 the highest risk of experiencing a parent incarcerated. These
22 children also have a higher chance of being placed in foster care
23 when a mother is incarcerated. In Michigan, black youth represent
24 50% of those in foster care and are less likely to be reunited with
25 their biological families than white youth; and

26 Whereas, The National Institute of Justice reports that
27 children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system,
28 in particular, face a host of challenges and difficulties:
29 psychological strain, antisocial behavior, suspension, or expulsion

1 from school, and criminal activity; and

2 Whereas, Children of incarcerated people deserve to have a
3 meaningful relationship with their parent and should not be further
4 separated or punished by the taking of their family visits if the
5 family members have not violated visiting rules; and

6 Whereas, Incarceration is also tied to a number of other
7 negative life outcomes that impact one's social and economic
8 mobility, including higher rates of homelessness, drug and alcohol
9 abuse, and physical and mental health concerns; and

10 Whereas, In 2021 Prison Policy Initiative reports that
11 visitation, mail, phone, and other forms of contact between
12 incarcerated people and their families have positive impacts for
13 everyone – including better health, reduced recidivism, and
14 improvement in school; and

15 Whereas, Families of the incarcerated know firsthand how
16 involvement in the legal system destabilizes and demoralizes
17 families and entire communities, When a person enters prison, they
18 are often the sole provider for their family, causing significant
19 economic hardship; and

20 Whereas, Families, including those members who are inside and
21 outside of prison, are a powerful driving force in the
22 transformation of the U.S. criminal legal and prison systems; and

23 Whereas, It is necessary for the input of those impacted
24 families and communities to inform and partner on viable and
25 racially equitable solutions to prevent entanglement in the legal
26 system, improve prison conditions, promote successful reentry, and
27 stop the revolving door to prison; and

28 Whereas, We envision a society in which families have
29 equitable access to the services and resources needed to keep their

1 loved ones safe and at home; that civil and human rights of those
2 who are incarcerated are respected and upheld; that prisons, jails
3 and community-based programs foster learning and growth by
4 facilitating opportunities for education and employment; and that
5 legal-impacted families have genuine opportunities to participate
6 in decision-making that directly impacts families; and

7 Whereas, If we want to stop the intergenerational cycle of
8 incarceration, we must intervene with families early, often, and in
9 a way that inspires hope rather than perpetuates trauma; and

10 Whereas, Families believe that a grassroots network of
11 educated, empowered family advocates is essential to shift the
12 prison culture of shame, fear, and anger to one of support,
13 empowerment, and hope. Families across the state have learned the
14 benefits of becoming connected and supported by others who share
15 this same difficult journey and find it necessary to be connected
16 to such a support system; and

17 Whereas, Families believe this vision can only be achieved by
18 addressing these oppressive systems that impact the most vulnerable
19 and historically marginalized; now, therefore, be it

20 Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of
21 this legislative body declare May 2023 as National Prisoner Family
22 Month in the state of Michigan.