

Chicago Sun-Times Op-Ed: Administration takes steps to reduce recidivism and reform criminal justice system

October 14 2016 9:53 AM



The following is an excerpt from an op-ed by Governor Rauner that was published in this morning's edition of the [Chicago Sun-Times](#):

The people of Illinois believe in redemption; we believe in second chances. All of us at one time or another need a second chance to turn a wrong into a right.

We must reform our broken criminal justice system to balance punishment with rehabilitation to reduce crime overall, safely reduce our prison population, reduce recidivism, and help those who have paid for their crime find a positive path in life after serving their time.

Since coming into office, criminal justice reform has been among our top priorities. One of our first acts was to establish the Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform to examine our current criminal justice and sentencing policies, practices, and resource allocation in Illinois. Our goal is to develop comprehensive, evidence-based strategies to more effectively improve public safety outcomes and reduce Illinois' prison population by 25 percent before 2025.

Today, Illinois is taking another step to reform our criminal justice system.

First, our administration will be closing Stateville Correctional Center's F House, one of the state's oldest and most costly prison housing units. It's Panopticon layout is antiquated and creates safety and operational hazards for both staff and offenders.

When also taking into account the \$10.3 million in deferred maintenance costs for F House, Illinois is better served by investing its limited resources into housing units and community-based programs that meet current national best practices and help reduce recidivism.

Second, in the coming months, we will reopen and repurpose the Illinois Youth Center at Murphysboro, which was built in 1993 and opened in 1997. A critical piece to our reform efforts is to help offenders gain valuable skills that will enable them to re-enter society as productive citizens. With that goal in mind, the Department of Corrections will reopen Murphysboro as a Life Skills and Re-Entry Facility, which is a minimum security facility with a focus on preparing offenders for a successful transition back into society through educational, vocational, and life skills training.

By closing F House and repurposing Murphysboro, Illinois is taking another important step to reform our criminal justice system.