



Decarcerate PA
PO Box 40764
Philadelphia, PA 19107
decarceratepa@gmail.com
267-217-3372
<http://decarceratepa.info/>

-For Immediate Release

Press Contact: Thomas Dichter ([617-447-4519](tel:617-447-4519))

Attn: News Desk

100-Mile March Arriving in Harrisburg to Protest Prison Expansion Decarcerate PA Rallies for Funding Education, Not New Prisons

On Sunday, June 2nd, about two dozen opponents of prison expansion will arrive in Harrisburg as part of their ten-day march from Philadelphia to Harrisburg. The march is being organized by Decarcerate PA, a grassroots coalition, and is co-sponsored by a broad alliance of community groups, nonprofits, labor organizations, education advocates, and formerly incarcerated organizers. The “March for a People’s Budget: Stop Prison Expansion Now!” began on May 25th. Participants are now making their way across Southeastern Pennsylvania to the state capital, where they will rally on June 3rd—just as the legislature returns to debate the budget. The marchers are demanding that the General Assembly take a stand against Pennsylvania’s out-of-control prison growth. In particular, they are asking legislators not to grant the Department of Corrections its requested \$68 million increase in funding while prison construction continues, and to cancel the \$400 million prisons slated to be built on the grounds of SCI Graterford in Montgomery County.

The march will arrive in Harrisburg on the afternoon of June 2nd. The marchers are dressed as a construction crew, wearing matching safety vests and holding stop-sign placards. “We are working to build communities, not prisons,” explained marcher Malissa Gamble. At 7:30 pm, they will hold a community conversation on mass incarceration in Pennsylvania at Harrisburg Friends Meeting. On Monday, June 3rd, at noon, they will rally on the front steps of the Capitol building, joined by American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania’s Andy Hoover, and other advocates. In addition to broad based community support, a growing number of legislators are speaking out against prison expansion and in favor of reinvesting in communities. Representative and Chair of the Legislative Black Caucus, Vanessa Lowery Brown, Representative Ron Waters, and Representative Curtis Thomas will all address

the crowd. Additional speakers will include individuals who have made the 113 mile trek from Philadelphia to Harrisburg and other community leaders.

The marchers are calling attention to the impact of recent budget cuts on Harrisburg. “Pennsylvania does not want, does not need, and cannot afford any more prisons,” said Decarcerate PA member Brian Mertens. “We want to see our taxpayer dollars invested in the things that make our communities stronger, like education, health care and social services, not in building more prison cells.” Dauphin county faces nearly \$11 million in cuts to education, with the Harrisburg school district losing close to \$3 million.

Along the way to Harrisburg, marchers have held community events in Haverford, Norristown, Collegeville, Pottstown, Reading, and Womelsdorf. “We’ve written letters, circulated petitions, held protests, and even engaged in nonviolent acts of civil disobedience,” said Leana Cabral of Decarcerate PA, who was arrested in November for blocking a prison construction entrance with a school desk and an apple. “Governor Corbett and legislators like to talk about being prison reformers, but they don’t walk the walk. So we’re walking all the way to Harrisburg to make sure they know we won’t go away until Pennsylvania stops building prisons and starts reinvesting in our communities.”

###

Decarcerate PA is a grassroots campaign working to end mass incarceration in Pennsylvania. We demand that PA stop building prisons, reduce the prison population, and reinvest money in our communities.