

**Senate Criminal Law Committee**  
**Senate Special Committee on Public Safety**  
**Joint Subject Matter Hearing on Sentencing Reform**  
**September 15, 2020 at 1 pm**

Dear Chairpersons Sims and Peters, Senators Stewart and Curran, and Committee Members,

On behalf of the **Workers Center for Racial Justice** (WCRJ), we urge you each to undertake decisive action to ensure the passage of [HB 5010](#) in the current legislative session. This critical measure would **abolish *extended term sentencing law***, a draconian facet of Illinois' criminal code, which permits the courts to impose long stretches of additional prison time onto already excessive sentences. By offering judges wide discretionary power to lengthen sentences on the basis of a sweeping array of broadly defined and often subjective "aggravating" factors, ***extended terms magnify the impact of racial bias in our court system.***

Over the past decade, **a steady increase in the length of sentences has emerged as a primary factor in sustaining the nation's inhumane and racially targeted system of mass incarceration.** Even as states have adopted legislative reforms aimed at decreasing prison populations, and rates of incarceration among Black Americans have continuously declined, the progress made has been offset by the alarming trend of increasingly long prison terms.

Exorbitant sentencing practices further exacerbate racial disparities in the U.S. penal system. Since 2000, the duration of prison time served by Black individuals nationwide has increased at nearly twice the rate of white inmates.

Excessive prison terms have also proven to have no positive impact on public security, in terms of crime deterrence or reductions in recidivism rates. To the contrary, **overly punitive and racially biased penal policies have only served to further aggravate the symptoms of structural inequality and racialized disinvestment that erode community safety.**

By ending *extended term* sentencing practices, HB 5010 would promote equity and justice for our communities. WCRJ calls upon Illinois lawmakers to divest public dollars away from the destructive prison system and redirect resources into programs that foster opportunity and liberation for all.

On behalf of WCRJ, we urge you each to act with all deliberate speed to pass this critical measure in the November legislative session.

Sincerely,

**WCRJ Policy Steering Committee**

Anthony Bryant  
Vera Randolph  
Brent Hamlet  
Shontoria Pratt  
Christophe Ringer  
Miranda Easley

Antonio Lightfoot  
Joi Imobhio  
Louisa Manske  
DeAngelo Bester  
Nicole Birmingham  
Ethan Viets-VanLear