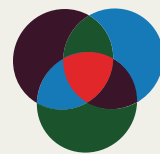
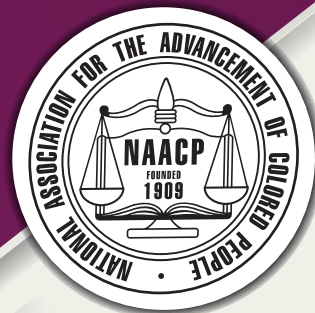




# DISMANTLING THE PATH TO DETENTION, IN WILSON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLIANA



CAPE NC

*Thank you to the In  
Our Backyards Program of the*

**Vera**  
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# Background

Wilson County is a rural county in North Carolina with a population of about 81 000 people. In March 2021, the unemployment rate in the county was 6,2 %. Twenty-three percent of residents and 39% of children in Wilson County live below the poverty line. In 2018, Wilson County's jail incarceration rate was 390.5 per 100 000 residents.



Currently, Wilson County lacks robust alternatives to detention. No diversion programs are advertised on the Sheriff's Office Website. This leaves officials with few sentencing options other than incarceration, even for lower level offenses. Given the lasting, damaging impacts of incarceration, the Wilson County IOB's intention is to work with local law enforcement, elected officials, and the district attorney to create and implement misdemeanor diversion programs, especially for the first time offender and for young adults (under age 30).

Our project is centered around young adults (under age 30) incarcerated for several reasons. A growing body of evidence suggests that early interactions with the justice system leads to future incarceration. Our plan is to use Durham County as a model, which currently has a robust misdemeanor diversion program that targets young adults and first time offenders. We hope that this project can contribute to the decarceration through community education and direct advocacy.

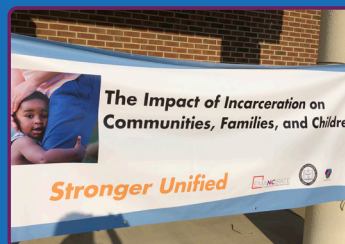
## Our Goal

The main goal of this project is to decrease incarceration and collateral consequences in Wilson County, North Carolina by:

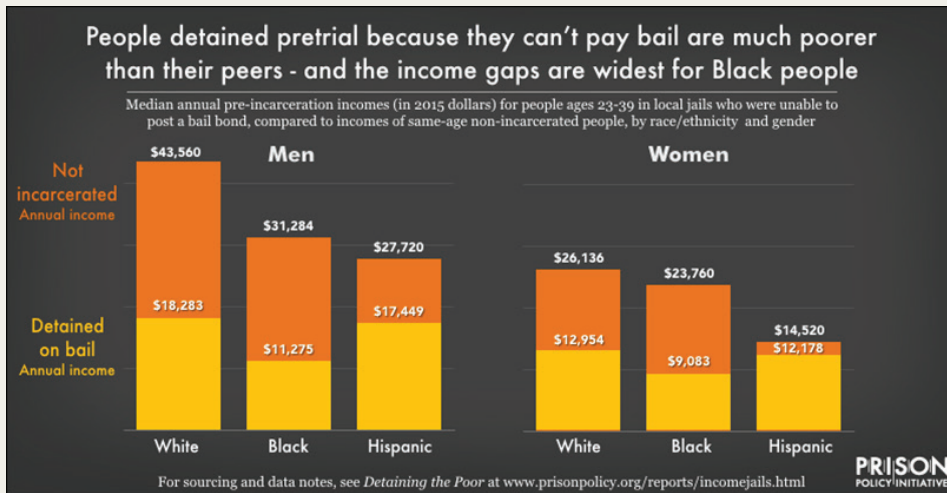
- A.** Shifting public and governmental opinion;
- B.** partnering with local law enforcement and community prevention entities;
- C.** Revising policies to implement diversion programs instead of incarceration whenever possible. Specifically, we plan to focus our advocacy efforts on young adults who are incarcerated.



We hosted a number of speakers / events in the last few years from different sectors of society that have spoken about incarceration, racism and justice.

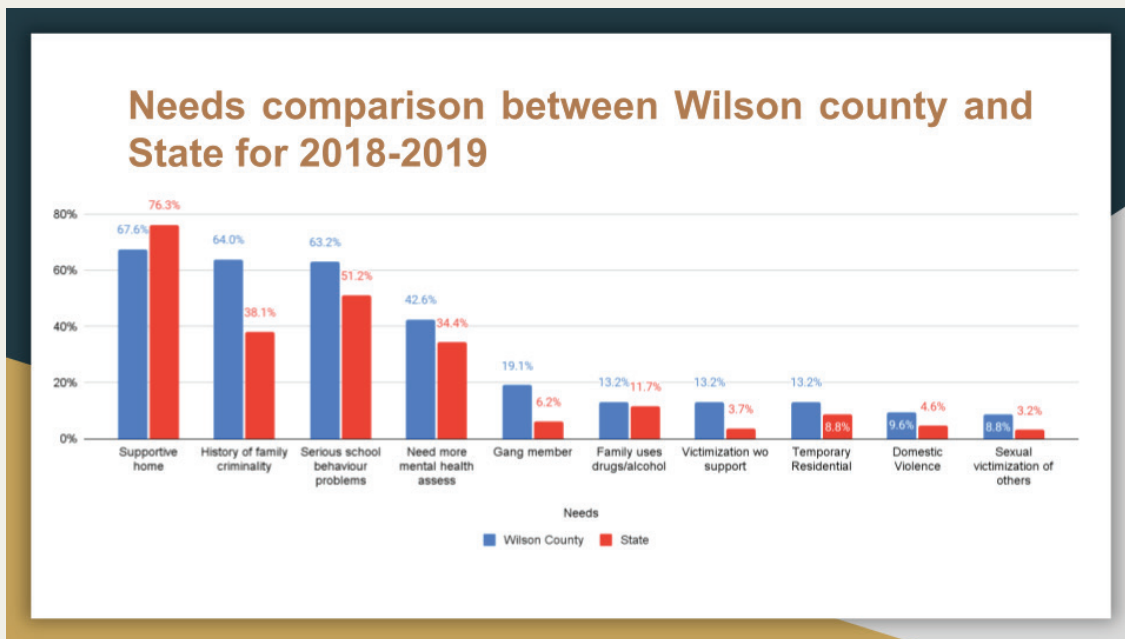


# The Data



*The project relies heavily on data to shift the public narrative about incarceration and the programmatic experiences of detained people. Approximately 40% of Wilson County is Black, and the majority of residents in the county are people of color. Each of the alliance partners*

*regularly use data to shift public perceptions about mass incarceration and public education, and we will continue to employ this tactic in our community forums about incarceration. The partnership consistently uses data to support arguments when advocating in meetings with government and education officials.*



# How will we achieve these goals?

**A.** To shift public opinion and gain support for reform, we host community forums that uplift the voices of the justice system involved individuals, articulate the pitfalls of current policy, and demonstrate the impact on the community.

**B.** We have hosted a learning exchange with individuals from Durham County misdemeanor diversion, including Restorative Justice Durham, the Durham District Attorney's Office, and Impact Justice, regarding how to implement restorative justice programs as an alternative to convictions on a county level. To target government decision makers, we plan to meet with elected officials, the sheriff, and the district attorney. We are planning a visit to a detention center with these and other stakeholders so that they can see first-hand the stark conditions in which individuals are detained. We will leverage existing relationships in order to persuade officials to revisit and revise current practices.

**C.** By the conclusion of the coordinated campaign, we aspire to have Wilson County Law enforcement officials agree to maximize the number of people in diversion programs rather than detention centers. We also hope that the community will have meaningfully engaged conversations about education.

## Our Targets



Wilson County Sheriff



Wilson County District Attorney



## Secondary Targets



Wilson County community

The community is being educated on how widespread young adult incarceration is and educational opportunities for incarcerated young adults-and how these issues specifically manifest in Wilson County.



# The Coalition

*The partnership includes Emancipate NC, the Wilson County Branch of the NAACP, and the Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE). We wish to decrease incarceration and collateral consequences in Wilson County, North Carolina.*

## Measuring Progress

**Progress will be measured with clear and demonstrable progress by tracking the following measures:**



Number of individuals reached with the message



Number of public forums, and attendance at those meetings



Number of policies revealed, eliminated, or enacted to prevent traditional incarceration



Number of individuals diverted from incarceration (based on historic numbers)



Number of government officials who demonstrate commitment to reform

### Partnership with

**Vera**  
INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

*1) Vera's unparalleled data analysis and research support assists in bringing this project to a higher level.*

*2) Vera's research provides comparative cases illustrating the issues in Wilson County that assists with evidence to support our claims.*

*3) Funding will permit us to print publications, host our forums in person as COVID restrictions are lifted, cover travel expenses for the detention center tour, provide honorariums for distinguished speakers and compensate the team.*