
JHA Statement on Governor's Announcement to Rebuild Logan and Stateville Correctional Centers, March 15, 2024

Today's announcement by Governor Pritzker to shutter [Logan](#) and [Stateville](#) Correctional Centers in order to rebuild them recognizes that these prisons are decrepit, unsafe, and inhumane. Acknowledging that both Logan and Stateville are not fit for human habitation represents an important step towards respecting the dignity and rights of people who are incarcerated, and there is benefit to rethinking our carceral environments in order to move towards smaller, more rehabilitative, modernized spaces that are adequately equipped and staffed to provide people with individualized help and treatment and reduce the suffering and trauma so often experienced in our current prisons. However, this announcement does not address the fact that the Illinois prisons are currently well under capacity, with close to 12,000 excess prison beds throughout the system; we can and should also permanently close some of our worst prisons. This makes good sense financially and morally.

The [Facility Master Plan Report](#), commissioned by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), authored by an independent consultant, and published in 2023 laid bare the unsafe and inhumane conditions that exist at Logan and Stateville Correctional Centers – as well as at many other Illinois prisons – as JHA has been [documenting and reporting](#) on for years. According to the report, billions of dollars are required to address the ravages of excessive deferred maintenance at many of the prisons, many of which – including Logan and Stateville – have infrastructure beyond fixing and could never be made to be appropriate spaces to treat, rehabilitate, or house people in custody. Most of Illinois' prisons were built before the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Prison Rape Elimination Act became law, making them out of compliance with legal safeguards that should be provided to every person and in violation of the civil rights of people who suffer because of this. Wheelchairs and assistive devices cannot be accommodated, and establishing sight lines and protections to stop or deter sexual victimization is not possible. Beyond these issues are the lack of technological infrastructure (making improved and increased communications, information access, and programming impossible) and the horrible conditions people incarcerated in these prisons contend with every

day: mold; poor ventilation; discolored, odorous, and particle filled water in cells and showers; water damage that leads to ceilings and floors collapsing; roofs caving in; infestations of rodents and vermin; extreme temperatures; and sewage and sanitation system failures, all of which impact the safety, health, and well-being of the people who live and work inside the prisons.

It is long past time that Logan and Stateville be depopulated and demolished. In 2023, women at Logan who responded to a JHA survey commented that “*our water has legionella, our showers, have leeches, our housing units have black mold & asbestos, The housing units are falling in on us*” and that, “*Every day, all day, we breathe BLACK MOLD, ASBESTOS, AND COAL DUST*”. According to the Facility Master Plan Report, “[o]ur review found the existing Logan Correctional Center to be inefficient, ineffective, and unsuitable for any population. The aging coal-fired power system, molding housing units, and facility layout all work in opposition to the mission and goals of the facility. IDOC should find a more suitable location for housing its incarcerated women” (pg. 44).

Conditions at Stateville are similarly horrible; in assessing this prison as part of the Facility Master Plan Report, it was found that, “[i]n addition to the extremely poor conditions throughout the facility (peeling paint, leaking roofs) the facility’s 100 year old design is reflective of 1800’s prison philosophy, with multitiered housing units. These units are poor for a maximum custody population, but even worse for a multi-custody re-entry mission. The units lack dayroom space or any adjacent program space. Cells are small and there is limited electrical connections resulting in extension cords ran from cell to cell. Due to limited line-of-sight, an intensive level of staffing is necessary to adequately supervise these units. Maintaining a constant ambient temperature is nearly impossible from the lower tier to the upper tier. Shower facilities are poor and create PREA issues. Overall, the facility can’t comply with ADA requirements” (pg. 46). In response to JHA surveys at Stateville in 2023, people incarcerated there wrote that “*Stateville should be overhauled or closed. No hot water for the past two months, legionella bacteria in our drinking water supply, also lead was found... infestation of roaches and spiders. I sleep with roaches crawling all in my bed and I keep myself and my cell clean*” and that, “*The drinking water is contaminated; people are developing cancer here at an alarming rate; the air circulation is very poor and we are developing upper respiratory problems from breathing in entirely too much dust/other unknown air pollutants on a daily basis for years on end; Black mold inside cells; very bad roach and mouse infestation...*”

Removing people from immediate harm by taking them out of Illinois' most decrepit and unsafe prisons is critical. Closing outdated, uninhabitable, redundant prisons is also critical in order to respect the human rights of all citizens and invest in strategies that will benefit everyone. We can reduce our reliance on incarceration and close the most inhumane prisons, while also considering new ways to house people who must remain that are safe, rehabilitative, and recognize and respect those who live and work inside our prisons. Investing in communities and social safety networks, increasing and improving educational and employment opportunities, and utilizing deflection and diversion more often will improve outcomes. Illinois cannot continue to house and employ people in prisons that pose a danger to everyone inside of them due to degraded and hazardous conditions; the costs are too high when measured in dollars, morality, and our humanity.

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