CIVIL SURVIVAL

2024 Legislative Report

We *couldn't have* done all of this without **YOU.**

Dear Friends,

The 2024 legislative session has concluded. This was a short session in a very important election year, so while there were many challenges and losses, several bills that will improve the lives of many in Washington did pass through the legislative process.

This wrap-up highlights bills that were both successes and disappointments, as well as budgetary allocations that allow our collective efforts to move forward. There is much more work to be done in 2025 and beyond and we will continue to push for the advancements that justice-impacted people in Washington deserve.

With gratitude,

— Civil Survival Policy Team

Legislative Accomplishments

SB 5974 Alleviating the burden of juvenile legal financial Obligations (LFOs)

In 2023, HB 1169 included a provision which prohibited the imposition of all non-restitution juvenile LFOs and rendered those LFOs uncollectible. SB 5974 takes the next, logical step of ensuring that those debts are declared null, void, and considered satisfied and paid in full by July 1, 2027.

SB 5998 Creating fairer timelines to vacate misdemeanor convictions

This bill aligns the timeline eligibility requirements for misdemeanors with felonies. In 2019, the New Hope Act (HB 1041) ensured that people would no longer have to wait until their LFOs were fully paid off before the clock starts ticking on their eligibility period to vacate their felony. This did not happen for misdemeanors, however, until SB 5998 passed this session. Now, people with misdemeanor convictions will no longer have to wait until all their LFOs are discharged before the timeline starts to vacate their convictions.

HB 2099 Ensuring that people being released from certain incarceration settings have valid state identification before release or discharge

This bill takes an important step towards the stability that people need upon release and reentry by requiring that state hospitals, the Special Commitment Center, secure community transition facilities, certain residential treatment facilities, and the Department of Corrections (DOC) provide people with valid state identification prior to their release or discharge from these facilities.

SB 5893 Expanding the provision of gate money

This bill is part of a continuing effort, started in 2023, to ensure that gate money is provided to more people who are leaving incarcerative settings. In 2023, the legislature created a $40 minimum for gate money, and provided money in the budget for a range of gate money from $40 to $300. This bill ensures that the requirement of gate money applies to people being transferred to community custody, to partial confinement as part of the Graduated Reentry Program, the Community Parenting Alternative, work release, and upon a grant of release by the ISRB.

HB 2084 : Requiring the Office of Corrections Ombuds (OCO) to create an oversight committee with the goal of improving construction-related training and pathways to state registered apprenticeships in state correctional facilities

Identifying the importance of creating more access to trades, this bill directs the OCO to establish a committee with wide-ranging expertise including people with lived experience with the goal of strengthening access to construction programs and apprenticeships. The committee is required to develop a report to the legislature by October 1, 2025 to outline their work and their findings and recommendations.

HB 1541 Incorporating “Nothing About Us Without Us” into the membership requirements for statutory entities

In an essential step forward, the legislature demonstrated the importance for people with lived experience to access and be represented in the policy-making process. This bill requires that any statutory entity created on or after January 1, 2025, include at least three people from underrepresented populations who have direct lived experience with the subject matter that the entity was created to study. Each entity will be required to collect information to ensure it is in compliance with the requirements of the bill and include that information in their final reports to the legislature.

Legislative Setbacks

HB 2001 Providing judges with discretion to modify long sentences

This bill represented a valiant effort by a broad-based coalition created and led by Charles Longshore and Travis Comeslast, who are currently incarcerated in DOC, to create more opportunities for people to get relief from long sentences. While this bill did not pass, it made substantial progress through the session and is a demonstration of the need to address long standing racial disparities in sentencing in Washington.

HB 2287 Creating an advisory board to the office of the corrections ombuds (OCO)

This bill would have resulted in an advisory board to the OCO that would be tasked with providing the OCO with important direction for the issues it should prioritize. The board was intended to be comprised of several members who are currently incarcerated, a development that would have been critical in centering the voices of impacted people with respect to the direction of the OCO moving forward.

HB 2030 Restoring voting rights to people in total confinement

Ensuring that people can vote even when in total confinement in DOC is critically important to addressing historic disenfranchisement on the basis of race. This bill would have built on previous efforts to ensure that people who have felony convictions can vote despite their criminal record.

HB 1087 / SB 5135 Solitary confinement

The use of solitary confinement by correctional facilities is a human rights violation and this bill sought to restrict the use of solitary confinement. Solitary confinement has long term, reverberating impacts on the people who are subjected to this inhuman treatment and it continues to be important for the legislature to grapple with the conditions under which people in Washington are imprisoned.

HB 1798 Increasing earned time eligibility

This bill would have changed earned time eligibility for people convicted of crimes on or after July 1, 2024, allowing for people to receive earned time of up to 33.33 percent of their total sentences, including certain sentencing enhancements.

HB 2178 Creating pathways of lifetime supervision for people convicted of sex offenses

Justice-impacted people deserve a second chance and when they have complied with all the terms of their sentence, and been reviewed by a board like the ISRB, they should be allowed to live their lives unencumbered by the correctional system. This bill would have created ways in which people convicted of certain sex offenses would be able to transition away from supervision.

HB 2065 Recalculating sentencing ranges for currently incarcerated individuals whose offender score was increased by juvenile convictions

This bill was a continuation of a 2023 effort to ensure that prior juvenile dispositions did not factor into offender score calculations for the purpose of sentencing. HB 1324 ensured that this was done prospectively while the retroactive, and just, application of the policy was stripped out of the bill. HB 2065 would have ensured that people who are currently incarcerated on unjust sentences that factored in their juvenile points, would be resentenced.

Budgetary Highlights

The 2024 supplemental budget passed in HB 5959 dedicated funding to the advancement of some reentry policy priorities, while also dedicating funding in misplaced and ineffective ways. The following are some examples of the pros and cons of budgetary allocations in 2024:

Adult and juvenile LFO debt:

- $165,000 for the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) to conduct a study of LFOs charged by superior courts and courts of limited jurisdiction. WSCCR must deliver a preliminary report to the appropriate legislative committees by November 20, 2024, and a final report by June 30, 2025.
- $51,000 for the implementation of SB 5974, which renders unenforceable juvenile debt null, void, and declared satisfied.

County clerk legal financial obligation grants:

These grants were increased significantly for every single county in Washington. Following a 2023 study by the Administrative Office of the Courts recommending additional funding, the legislature moved forward with additional funding across counties, despite years of data demonstrating that collecting LFO debt has been imposed on our indigent communities and increasing collection efforts only harms Washingtonians.

The 2023-2024 biennium brought both setbacks and positive developments for justice-impacted people in Washington. Throughout 2024, and during the 2025 legislative session, Civil Survival will continue to advance reentry policy alongside our advocacy partners in the community.