

Emmy Nominated, Michigan Man, Michael Thompson, Leads Prison Reform Rally at the Capitol in Lansing, MI

Ben & Jerry's is giving free Ice Cream at the event as part of their national campaign calling on Governors to grant Clemency for all marijuana related cases.

LANSING, MI, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Hundreds are expected to gather on the Capitol lawn enjoying free Ben and Jerry's ice cream for a Saturday afternoon of advocacy for the increased use of clemency in efforts to end mass incarceration. "Clemency refers to the power of Governor Whitmer to release individuals from prison with the power of her signature." Said Michael Thompson, President of the Michael Thompson Clemency Project's board. "There are a lot of good people still inside that need her help." Michael Thompson received a clemency from Governor Whitmer in 2021 after serving more than 25 years of a 40-60 year sentence for the sale of cannabis.

Other speakers will include Michigan Supreme Court Justice Richard Bernstein, Prison reform activist and MI U.S. Senate Candidate Hill Harper, Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit, Criminal Legal System Reform organization leaders, as well several formerly incarcerated individuals and families currently impacted.

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<https://www.benjerry.com/420>

As for his own freedom efforts, Michael Thompson story was widely shared through the Shorts Documentary - The Sentence of Michael Thompson, which was recently nominated for an Emmy.



Event Poster Final

Justice impacted citizen stories include: Tina Talbot, was formerly incarcerated for killing her husband in an act of self defense that many believe saved not only her own but her son's life. She will be speaking to the many victims of domestic violence currently serving long term prison sentences for what many see as acts of self defense.

The freedom efforts of Nancy Seaman will be shared by Justice Thru Storytelling Founder Kelle Lynn. Nancy's tragic story and incarceration help highlight the need for mass clemency for the hundreds of battered women in Michigan.

Cases like Tina and Nancy help highlight a specific categorical clemency category put forth by the Michael Thompson Clemency Project and other national experts.

Categories include:

- Seniors who have served more than half their sentence.
- People with chronic illnesses.
- Individuals with convictions related to marijuana.
- Domestic violence victims.

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Michael Thompson

- Individuals sentenced to life without parole as juveniles.
- Individuals automatically tried as adults for crimes committed as youth.

While Michigan's prison and jail population declined in the past three years, much of that reduction coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic. Commutations occur infrequently and are often granted to only a few people and parole grants in 2021 were the lowest they had been in more than

30 years. These rates and the processes that lead to them do not align with the evidence based reform recommendations or the need to address decades of systemic and institutional inequity and the carceral system's disproportionate impact on many Michigan communities.

We applaud the State of Michigan for making great strides in criminal justice reform in recent years. This is an important reflection of our society's growing recognition that we are incarcerating far too many people for far too long, with lasting negative consequences for families and communities, and particularly people of color. Unfortunately, it can take years for



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reforms to effectuate the change, and even when enacted many do not apply retroactively to many people already languishing in prison.

Clemency authority is a powerful tool to correct errors of the past, give people a second chance at life outside of prison walls, and put families and communities back together. We urge Governor Whitmer to direct the Michigan Parole Board to initiate and prioritize reviewing and approving applications for executive clemency, and for the Governor's office to grant clemency to the recommended categories listed above.

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