

# CRITICAL RESISTANCE

Dear California Workers,

*Are you a member of a labor union? Do you have a family member or loved one currently imprisoned in the state of California? Were you, or someone you love, previously imprisoned in California? Do you want to end the racist control of the prison industrial complex? If so, we need your help in our **fight to close state prisons!***

We understand the impact that prison has on individuals and their loved ones, and want to bring in the voices of union members with experiences of imprisonment into our campaign. We believe that working with organized labor will be crucial not only for winning this campaign but also for building a more just road forward. Part of the fight will include rerouting over \$1.5 billion in funds from the state budget towards other infrastructure that actually supports our communities, such as schools, healthcare, housing, and other life-affirming resources. Labor unions will be critical in advocating for meaningful contracts and dignified work as these investments move forward. In order to achieve this, we need your support!

In 2020, **Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB)**, a formation of over 80 anti-prison organizations from across California, launched the campaign to close 10 prisons by 2025 with **the People's Plan for Prison closure**. This campaign has fought diligently over the past two years to encourage Governor Newsom to close Deuel Vocational Institute (DVI) in Tracy, CA and California Correctional Center in Susanville, and we have been successful!



Now is a key moment to get involved in the campaign. Governor Newsom has announced that three more prisons can be closed starting in 2023. This is where you can come in. *Are your loved ones in one of the facilities listed in our prison closure list? Are you interested in working with us on pushing forward the fight to close prisons and helping redirect funds to good paying jobs that support local communities? Join us!*

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There are many ways that you can support our campaign. We are working to regularly bring together a group of union members to take action in guiding the coalition to engage organized labor in this campaign, and we want to speak with you! **Please email [croakland@criticalresistance.org](mailto:croakland@criticalresistance.org)**. You can also **[circulate our electronic sign up sheet on our website](#)** to other union members to join the fight.

If you'd like to learn more about the campaign, **[check out our website](#)**. Also **[check out the attached factsheet for organizing against imprisonment with unions](#)** that has more information about ***how workers in Locals can support the campaign to close 10 prisons by 2025!***

In Solidarity,

Critical Resistance



Scan QR to visit Close CA Prisons campaign page on CR's website: [criticalresistance.org](http://criticalresistance.org)

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# Close California Prisons!

## The Role of Unions in Reducing Imprisonment

Unions and the labor movement play a central role in fighting for strong and healthy communities. Our unions fight for living wages for working people, safer and healthier working conditions, and to ensure that workers' rights are safeguarded. Organized labor and union members have also been a powerful vehicle for advancing social, racial, and economic justice. We are in a crisis of imprisonment that is devastating the lives of workers and our families, yet more money is wasted on prisons rather than improving our communities and economy. Unions and union members can play an important role in reducing imprisonment by working with other social justice movements, and we invite you to join this work.

### **THE PRISON SYSTEM IS ANTI-LABOR**

The prison industrial complex almost exclusively targets working class communities, and disproportionately those in Black communities and communities of color. In the U.S., around 70 million people have a criminal record that bars them from access to employment. Additionally, there are 2.3 million people locked up at any given time –the highest number of any country in the world. In total, the people who are either unable to work or face severe barriers to employment because of being targeted by the prison industrial complex amounts to half the country's workforce.

The prison system's attack on working class people is directly an attack on the ability for unions to grow their organizing power. Studies have shown that people in places with higher incarceration rates are less likely and able to join unions because of the barriers placed on people's employment. Based on this alone, it is in the interest of the labor movement to support the effort to shrink the imprisonment system.

### **THE PRISON SYSTEM IS RACIST**

Black people, people of color, and working class people make up the strength and power of labor unions. Black and Latino communities show the greatest support for unions, and Black communities have the highest rate of union membership across other races. Yet prisons disproportionately impact communities of color. While Black communities only make up 6% of the California population, they account for 27% of the state's imprisoned population. Labor unions have been at the forefront of fighting for racial justice. Yet, mass incarceration is arguably one of the biggest engines of racial injustice in our time. We believe that in order to truly live up to our commitments for a world free of racism, it is crucial for the labor movement to join the effort against imprisonment.

