Engage multiple city partners to reduce recidivism through engagement at different phases of individuals' lives.

What It Means

Locking up low level offenders shouldn't be at the top of our list in this current crisis of violent crime. Marijuana possession should not result in jail time. At different stages of individuals’ lives in which they may struggle and slip into criminal behavior, Indy must have a plan to help them through those stages. Young people new to the criminal justice system, those facing reentry to society after incarceration, those with serious mental health struggles, and people confronting food shortage all present different patterns if they slip into a pattern of unlawful behavior. We should plan for each.

Why?

Age, poverty level, and education are the key variables to predict criminal behavior. Education and crime are intertwined: keeping our city’s young people in school reduces the likelihood they will engage in criminal behavior (31). Reentry for inmates is a crucial stage to ensure that upon release, sufficient opportunities exist that help individuals stay out of jail. Programs that offer a wide range of services after incarceration lead to lower recidivism rates. Those that begin as early as possible in an inmate’s sentence are more successful (32).

A successful public safety plan must address mental health differently than Indianapolis has in the past. Suffering from mental health alone does not correlate to an increase in criminal behavior (33). We must not use city resources to incarcerate those who suffer from poor mental health but pose little threat to our safety, as that does little to solve the overarching problem. We should focus our resources on preventing those struggling with poor mental health from falling into substance abuse - which can more readily correlate with criminal behavior. My administration will direct our faith leaders throughout the community to focus on preventing our young people from following this dangerous path. As a Catholic and a philanthropist, I will help lead these efforts personally.

Indianapolis has struggled with food scarcity and eliminating food deserts in the past, evidenced by the fact that 23% of children in Marion Co. were food insecure in 2020 (34). Food insecurity has a damaging impact on our city’s young people contributing to both physical and behavioral issues (35). Business incentives to shrink the number of food deserts in Indianapolis is directly correlated to keeping our city safe.

How?

As mayor, I will implement an effective, data-driven and financially sustainable early childhood education/public safety initiative that engages individuals from birth to any stage of life specifically to prevent recidivism. Public-private programs for incarcerated individuals will focus on re-entry from the first day of an inmate's sentence, by providing skills training as well as mentoring (36). I will work toward business incentives aimed at increasing the availability of healthy foods and will track and publish progress toward shrinking the number of food deserts in our city.

32. 4 Elements of Successful Reentry Programs for Inmates
33. Mental illness and violence: Debunking myths, addressing realities
34. Hunger and food insecurity in Indianapolis
35. Effects of Hunger | Feeding America
36. BOP: Reentry
Eliminating Perceptions of Chaos

What It Means
Disorder is commonly linked to crime at the community level (37). Abandoned buildings, broken street lights, and shattered or boarded up windows all contribute to a perception by residents and visitors that a city is in a state of chaos. Unclean alleys and streets contribute to this perception by signaling that city-government is absent. Not only is it unpleasant to look at, but it sends a message that the city does not care. People do not want to live in cities that look this way. They want to live in vibrant, beautiful neighborhoods. If a built environment appears chaotic, it shows that no one is watching. If no one is watching, criminals are emboldened.

Why?
Over the last seven years Indianapolis businesses and residents were forced to board up windows and doors, and many haven't recovered from the violent riots that shook our city. Others have opted to close rather than jeopardize the safety of their employees or customers. A city with poorly-lit streets along storefronts of shattered or boarded up windows can expect crime soon to follow. Restoring deteriorating spaces will motivate residents to maintain the sidewalks and public spaces outside their homes and incentivize businesses to take interest in maintaining the streets outside their doors. We have to do better and we will.

How?
As mayor, my administration will work to fill abandoned spaces, fix broken street lights, clean our streets, and not give up on any place as too dangerous, too broken or too unimportant to fix. I will invest and improve physical neighborhoods without displacing residents. I will work with smaller communities to improve crime prevention through environmental design, to create or restore public spaces where people can gather together and feel safe. I will ensure that our streets and alleys are clean by aggressive enforcement and increased penalties for illegal dumping.