PRISON TRANSPARENCY PROJECT REPORT:

The Case for Repealing "Three Strikes" Laws

Prepared by:

Prison Transparency Project

Founder:

Dr. Angela Cotellessa Meyers

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THE CASE FOR REPEALING "THREE STRIKES" LAWS

The Problem with "Three Strikes" Laws

- **Excessive Punishment:** "Three Strikes" laws mandate severe, often life sentences for individuals convicted of three or more serious criminal offenses, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the third offense. This has led to disproportionately harsh sentences, sometimes for relatively minor crimes, when it constitutes a third strike.

- **Overcrowding Prisons:** These laws have contributed significantly to prison overcrowding, with many individuals serving life sentences for non-violent or low-level offenses. This has strained resources and increased the costs of maintaining the prison system, without corresponding benefits to public safety.

The Injustice of "Three Strikes"

- **Disproportionate Impact:** The application of "Three Strikes" laws often disproportionately affects marginalized communities, particularly people of color, who are more likely to be convicted of offenses that count as strikes. This exacerbates existing inequalities within the criminal justice system.

- **Lack of Rehabilitation Focus:** The "Three Strikes" approach is fundamentally punitive, leaving little room for rehabilitation or reintegration into society. Individuals sentenced under these laws are often condemned to spend the rest of their lives in prison, regardless of their potential for reform.

The Case for Repealing "Three Strikes" Laws

- **Restoring Proportionality in Sentencing:** Repealing "Three Strikes" laws would allow for more proportionate sentencing, where the punishment fits the crime. This would enable judges to consider the specific circumstances of each case, rather than being bound by rigid mandatory sentencing laws.

- **Reducing Prison Overcrowding:** Eliminating "Three Strikes" laws would help alleviate overcrowding in prisons by ensuring that only those who truly pose a danger to society are subject to life sentences. This would also free up resources to focus on investment into smart, humane crime prevention, rehabilitation resources, and reintegration programs.

Moving Towards a More Just System

- **Legislative Action:** Lawmakers must prioritize the repeal of "Three Strikes" laws as part of broader criminal justice reform efforts. This would represent a significant step towards a system that values fairness, proportionality, and rehabilitation over excessive punishment.

- **Public Awareness and Advocacy:** Advocates for criminal justice reform should continue to raise awareness about the negative impacts of "Three Strikes" laws, building public support for their repeal and promoting alternatives that focus on restorative justice.

This report is part of a series produced by the Prison Transparency Project, aimed at uncovering and addressing issues within the prison system. For additional reports and recommendations, please visit our website at **https://prisontransparency.com.**