

CENTER NEWS AND EVENTS 2023- 2024

- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented a webinar in partnership with The Joyce Foundation, “Funding Safety: Crises and Opportunities for Violence Prevention Efforts,” on Oct. 29, 2024.
- The Center co-hosted “Criminal Legal Reform in the 2025 Maryland Legislative Session: Advocates’ Retreat” on Oct. 7, 2024. The retreat brought together attendees from across the state and DMV region to deepen collaboration among diverse partners in criminal legal reform advocacy community and prepare for the 2025 legislative session. This second annual retreat was hosted in partnership with Steering Committee organizations Out for Justice, Justice Policy Institute, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, Maryland Office of the Public Defender, ACLU of Maryland, Job Opportunities Task Force, and Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform.
- The Center joined its partners at UBalt Law’s Center for Families, Children and the Courts at their annual Symposium, “Keeping Youth in Community: Policies, Practices, and Programs to Promote Youth Justice” on Oct. 1, 2024. Executive Director **Heather Warnken** participated in a panel entitled, “Fostering Youth Connections to Community During Reentry.”
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** attended the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence Symposium, “Paths Forward from the Age of Gun Violence: Industry Accountability and the Modern Second Amendment,” at the University at Buffalo School of Law on Sept 27, 2024. Warnken participated in a panel titled, “Multidisciplinary Efforts to Combat Gun Violence,” speaking about non-carceral strategies to address violence rooted in healing, community resources and support.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** attended the Center for American Progress 10th Annual Gun Violence Reduction Summit in Washington, D.C. Warnken participated in a panel on Sept. 24, 2024 titled, “Scaling Impact: How Local, State and Federal Offices of Violence Prevention Confront Gun Violence,” with Tim Daly, director of Gun Violence Prevention and Justice Reform Program, The Joyce Foundation, and Wilford Pickney, director, Office of Violence Prevention, City of St. Louis, MO. [Watch a recording of the presentation](#) .
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** attended Color of Change’s annual Prosecutorial Accountability Convening in New Orleans, LA, “Winning Justice.” Warnken joined fellow panelists on Sept. 19, 2024 for a panel titled, “Strategies for Holding Punitive Prosecutors Accountable.”
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented at the annual Post Conviction Forum, “Beyond the Verdict,” hosted by Life After Release on Sept. 7, 2024. Warnken joined members of the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Pardon Attorney for a panel titled, “Federal Clemency, Pardons, and Commutations.”
- On Aug 14, the Center teamed up with A24 Films and the Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative (MEJC) to co-host the Baltimore premiere of the critically acclaimed film "Sing Sing," based on the real-life Rehabilitation Through the Arts program at Sing Sing maximum-security prison in New York.

- The National Criminal Justice Association Equity Committee released a groundbreaking guidance document for the field, “Meaningful Community Engagement in Public Safety Funding.” The Center was proud to be a collaborator on this publication and member of the committee alongside community partners and funding administrators throughout the country convened by NCJA. [Read the Guidance document.](#)
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented at the Giffords annual Community Violence Intervention Conference in Los Angeles, CA, on June 24, 2024 on a panel titled, “The Intersection of Victim/Survivor Services in Community Violence Intervention,” in partnership with Ben “Taco” Owens, and E Ruebman from the Community Based Public Safety Collective . [Read a recap of this presentation and impactful conference](#) .
- On June 17, 2024, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore pardoned over 175,000 cannabis-related convictions. This is the most sweeping pardon of its kind in the nation and represents the culmination of a long advocacy effort that involved a broad coalition of directly impacted Marylanders, experts and organizations – led, in large part, by the Center, which organized and convened a diverse coalition of advocates pushing for a broad categorical pardon, and then serving as a bridge between the advocacy community and the Moore administration.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented at the Federal Public Defender’s Criminal Justice Act Panel Training Program in Baltimore on May 31, 2024. Warnken’s presentation, “Closing the Gap Between Research, Policy, & Practice: Bringing Public Health Perspectives to Federal Firearm Sentencings,” described critical and emerging research and policy arguments for shifting away from overly punitive approaches to gun violence, in favor of evidence-based alternatives that more effectively advance public safety.
- **Heather Warnken**, executive director of the Center, and Center affiliate **Prof. Katie Kronick**, director of the UBalt Law Criminal Defense and Advocacy Clinic, participated in a BRIDGE Series event in Washington, D.C. on May 20, 2024, hosted by Arnold Ventures. The event focused on early access to counsel in Maryland’s criminal legal system.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** served as the Commencement speaker for the [No Struggle, No Success](#) Reentry Program Graduation Ceremony on April 27, 2024. The event brought together reentry leaders and champions throughout the state, including Maryland DPSCS Secretary Scruggs, U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen’s office, and Baltimore City Council President Nick Mosby, alongside friends and family, to celebrate the 2024 graduates for their numerous achievements spanning education, employment, family reunification and more, in their transitions back to the community from incarceration.
- The Center participated in a day-long forum hosted by the University of Baltimore Law Review, “[Law, Policy, and Maryland’s Cannabis Industry](#),” on April 12, 2024. Executive Director **Heather Warnken** moderated a panel on a new era of cannabis and criminal legal reform, featuring perspectives from the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, and the Hon. Mark W. Crooks, Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** published an op-ed co-authored by Prof. Alex Piquero, the former head of the Bureau of Justice Statistics at the U.S. Department of

Justice, [calling on Maryland Gov. Wes Moore to the veto legislation passed by the Maryland General Assembly](#) rolling back juvenile justice reforms.

- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented a session at the national Community Violence Intervention and Prevention convening hosted by the U.S. Department of Justice in Chicago, Realizing the Promise of Victim Compensation in the CVI Ecosystem, on April 5, 2024.
- Legal Fellow Flannery Gallagher and Executive Director **Heather Warnken** published an op-ed describing [the importance of access to expungement](#) for thousands of Marylanders held back by their criminal records from employment and numerous other opportunities.
- The Center co-hosted a webinar event with the Community Based Public Safety Collective and the Alliance for Safety and Justice, “[Understanding the Proposed Changes in Victim Compensation](#)” on March 22, 2024. The Center also submitted a public comment through the *Federal Register* to help support needed advancements in equity and access to support throughout the country for underserved survivors of crime.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** participated in the national [Summit to Address Carjackings](#) in Washington, DC, on Jan. 25, 2023. Convened by the Police Executive Research Forum, the summit brought together stakeholders and perspectives across law enforcement, community violence intervention, victim services and more, to bring attention to the issue, and to discuss and document what can be done.
- The **Task Force to Study Transparency Standards for State’s Attorneys** submitted its final [Report to the Maryland General Assembly](#). Executive Director **Heather Warnken** was appointed by Maryland Gov. Wes Moore to serve on the Task Force in August 2023.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** participated in the [National Summit to Advance States’ Criminal Justice Priorities](#) in Atlanta on Dec 5-6, 2023. Warnken joined partners in the Office of the Public Defender and Gov. Wes Moore administration in the Maryland delegation.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** [testified before the United States Commission on Civil Rights](#) in a briefing focused on addressing racial and ethnic disparities in violent victimization on Nov. 17, 2023.
- **Heather Warnken**, executive director, was named to the **Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative**, an historic new initiative to shape a comprehensive plan for addressing the urgent issue of mass incarceration, particularly impacting Black men and other marginalized groups within Maryland's prisons and jails. Launched by the **Office of the Attorney General** and the **Office of the Public Defender**, this powerful collaboration also includes the Judge Alexander Williams, Jr. Center for Education, Justice & Ethics at the University of Maryland College Park; the Institute for Restorative Justice and Practices at Bowie State University; and other key leaders and directly impacted voices throughout the state. Warnken will serve on the executive committee and co-chair the subcommittee devoted to reforming law enforcement policies and practices.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** was appointed by Maryland Gov. Wes Moore to the **Task Force to Study Transparency Standards for State’s Attorneys**.
- The Center co-hosted an event, “[Criminal Legal Reform in the 2024 Maryland Legislative Session: Advocates’ Retreat](#),” on Oct. 27, 2023.
- **Heather Warnken**, executive director, was named to Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown’s **Civil Rights Advisory Council** and attended the Council’s inaugural meeting Oct. 12, 2023.

- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented a webinar for the **Community Based Public Safety Collective** on Oct. 10, 2023: ["Realizing the Promise of Victims Compensation: Helping Community Violence Intervention Meet the Needs of Victims."](#)
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented at the national **Health Alliance for Violence Intervention Conference** in Chicago, IL on Sept. 27, 2023. Warnken was a featured speaker in a panel, "Crime Victim Compensation: Recommendations to Help Meet the Needs of Underserved Victims and Advance Legislative Change."
- The Center and the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform presented a Sept. 9, 2023 conference, **"Beyond Confinement: Rethinking Corrections & Rehabilitation in Maryland,"** at the University of Baltimore School of Law. The conference explored innovative approaches to transforming the current system, aiming to create a more effective, humane and equitable approach to rehabilitation.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented at the **National Center for Victims of Crime Annual Conference** in Boston, MA, on Sept. 8, 2023. Warnken gave a presentation on the impact of the U.S. Department of Justice's Public Safety Partnership Program in improving access to services and supports for underserved victims of crime.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** presented at the national **Victims of Crime Act Annual Conference** in Chicago, IL on Aug. 15, 2023, "Pathways Toward Equity in Grants Administration."
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** co-authored an Aug. 14 op-ed in [The Baltimore Sun](#) with Maryland Legal Aid Bureau's Somil Trivedi, "Baltimore's new citation won't make us safer - but it will make us poorer."
- The Center and the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform presented a Sept. 9 conference, **"Beyond Confinement: Rethinking Corrections & Rehabilitation in Maryland,"** at the University of Baltimore School of Law. The conference explored innovative approaches to transforming the current system, aiming to create a more effective, humane and equitable approach to rehabilitation.
- **Heather Warnken**, executive director, co-authored a report, [Realizing the Promise of Crime Victim Compensation: Recommendations to Help Community Violence Intervention Meet the Needs of Underserved Victims](#), published in July 2023 by New York University's Marron Institute. Crime Victim Compensation is a federal- and state-level program designed to reimburse victims for certain out-of-pocket expenses resulting from their victimization. *Realizing the Promise* recommends reforms to address inequities and improve the effectiveness of Crime Victim Compensation throughout the country.
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** participated in the national **Safe and Just Communities Summit** in New York City, co-hosted by the National Urban League and John Jay College (CUNY), on May 8-9, 2023. Warnken was a featured speaker in a panel entitled "Fair and Accountable Policing for Safe Communities."
- Executive Director **Heather Warnken** was honored as a *Maryland Daily Record* Leader in Law at an April 25, 2023, event.
- In April 2023, Executive Director **Heather Warnken** co-authored a report, **"Equity Across a Continuum in Public Safety Grants Administration."** The report was released as part of a sustained effort toward advancing equity and reducing disparities in the criminal justice system led by the National Criminal Justice Association.

