

# KYGA 2024 DIGITAL TOOLKIT

---

**SAFER KENTUCKY ACT**

**ACLU**  
Kentucky



# 2024 DIGITAL TOOLKIT

OVERVIEW **I**

TALKING POINTS **II**

SOCIAL MEDIA **III**

TRADITIONAL MEDIA **IV**

SCRIPTS **V**

CONTACT US **IV**

# SAFER KENTUCKY ACT

## OVERVIEW

In September 2023, Kentucky lawmakers unveiled a package of proposed legislation under the name “The Safer Kentucky Act.” While several legislators have attached their names to the bills, those who have openly spoken in favor of it with news media include Rep. Jason Nemes and Rep. Jared Bauman.

On December 15, 2023, Bauman and Nemes presented the bill to the Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary. No opposition testimony was allowed at the hearing.

So-called “tough on crime” policies have been around since the 1970s. A study by a group of criminologists and sociologists published in August 2020 found that an entire generation during the “tough on crime” era of the 1980s and early 1990s spent more time in prison serving longer sentences than any other generation before or after. Many are still serving time under those harsh sentences.

The draconian laws that emerged from the tough-on-crime era are too concerned with being punitive. Life without the possibility of parole, three-strikes laws and other sentencing enhancements, which add additional time to a sentence, are not proven crime deterrents.

Research has also found that prisons create more crime. One of the many ways that overuse of prisons hurts communities is that incarceration robs children of their parents. The result of this is that children with incarcerated parents tend to find themselves in the court system as well, making incarceration a generational curse.

There are some beneficial provisions in the bill. Focusing on those, instead of reviving failed policies and sweeping our problems into the carceral system, would do far more to make Kentucky safer.

## TALKING POINTS

### TALKING WITH LEGISLATORS

- The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, and Kentucky incarcerates more people than almost any democracy on earth.
- Imprisonment is not rehabilitation and does not address the root causes of crime.
- Incarceration has a marginal impact on crime, and that impact is lessening every year.
- Nothing detailed in the so-called “Safer Kentucky Act” will make Kentuckians any safer.
- The “Safer” Kentucky Act is an extremely bloated collection of regressive policies and regurgitated ideas that have proven ineffective in the past.
- Long prison sentences, “zero-tolerance” policies, mandatory minimums, aggressive prosecution and other antiquated criminal penalties are nothing new, and they do nothing to increase public safety. They only perpetuate our mass incarceration crisis, making jails overpopulated and creating unsafe conditions inside of them.
- In Kentucky’s largest city, jail deaths reached a crisis point just in the last two years. People who were being held pre-trial, meaning they had not been convicted of any crime.
- There is no data to support the idea that incarceration or increased penalties deter crime; in fact, data tells us that these “reforms” are harmful to communities.
- Bills like this give the illusion of “law and order” while continuing to punish vulnerable populations and add to Kentucky’s incarceration crisis.
- Studies have long shown increased penalties do not deter crime, but investing in people does.
- Mandatory sentences and penalties apply a “one size fits all” answer to a variety of circumstances that are, at a minimum, incredibly complex situations.
- Mandatory sentences and penalties eliminate prosecutorial discretion and force harsh penalties with no regard for nuance.
- Almost half of US States have outlawed the death penalty as inhumane.

# TALKING POINTS

## TALKING WITH FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

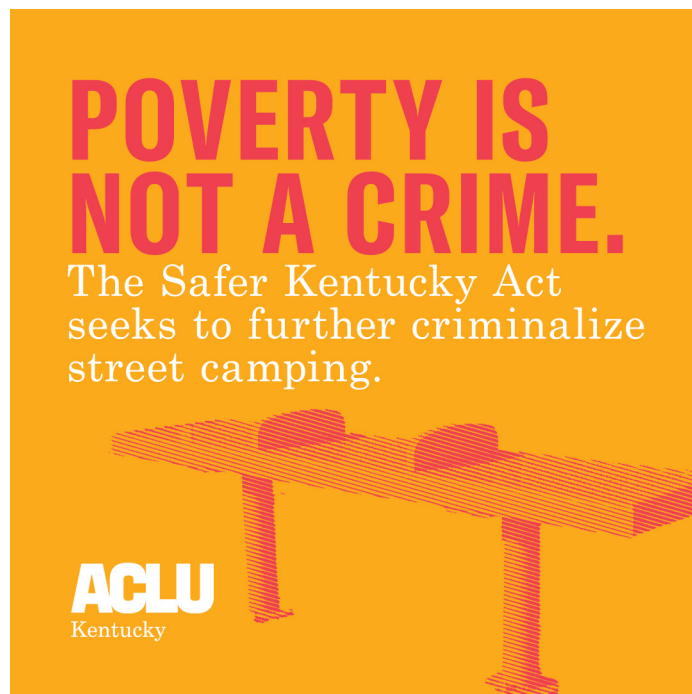
- Our country imprisons more people than anywhere else in the world.
- Sending people to prison doesn't solve problems or decrease crime.
- Laws like this make it harder for people who are wrongfully arrested or convicted to get justice.
- The so-called "Safer Kentucky Act" will not make Kentuckians any safer.
- We've tried these kinds of policies before – they didn't work in the 1970s and they won't work today.
- Long prison sentences, "zero-tolerance" policies, mandatory minimums, and aggressive prosecution are nothing new, and they do nothing to increase public safety.
- It hurts communities to over-incarcerate people and let the government dictate what "justice" means without looking at individual cases. That's why we have judges.
- Terms like "law and order" and "tough on crime" just mean the government wants to lock people up instead of helping address real issues in communities across Kentucky.
- Studies have long shown increased penalties do not deter crime, but investing in people does.
- Mandatory sentences and penalties don't let prosecutors and judges do their jobs. They are the people who are face to face with these issues, and we shouldn't force them to put more people in prison when there are other solutions.
- We need to remind lawmakers that they work for us, and they owe us better than old, broken policies dressed up to look new.

# SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

## SOCIAL MEDIA

When posting about legislative issues, always check the ACLU of Kentucky's channels for content to share! We are @ACLUofKY on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Threads](#). Following our feed is the best way to find up-to-date information and graphics. If you want to make your own posts about this issue, here is some sample text. Add personal stories and details to make more impact!

### GRAPHICS



# SOCIAL MEDIA (cont.)

## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: FACEBOOK

Lawmakers are considering a massive bill that will incarcerate more Kentuckians and cost taxpayers millions of dollars. It recycles old, failed policies dating back to the 70s. Join me in calling your representatives in Frankfort and telling them: locking up more Kentuckians won't make our communities any safer. Call your Senator or Representative and tell them to OPPOSE the Safer Kentucky Act.

## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: TWITTER/X

The #saferkyact won't make us any safer. We need real solutions to the root causes of crime in our communities. Tell lawmakers they can do better. Call your state rep or senator and tell them you OPPOSE the "Safer Kentucky Act." #KYGA24 #dontincarcerateourstate

## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: INSTAGRAM

Tell lawmakers to go back to the drawing board – the "Safer Kentucky Act" doesn't make anyone safe. We need real solutions to the root causes of crime, not failed policies with a new name. Tell your representatives in Frankfort they can do better. Call your state rep or senator and tell them you OPPOSE the "Safer Kentucky Act." #KYGA24 #dontincarcerateourstate

## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST: THREADS

The #saferkyact won't make our communities any safer. We need real solutions to the root causes of crime in our communities, not failed policies under a new name. Tell your representatives in Frankfort they can do better. OPPOSE the "Safer Kentucky Act." #KYGA24 #dontincarcerateourstate

# TRADITIONAL MEDIA

## SAMPLE OP-ED - AIM FOR 500-750 WORDS

A variety of individuals write opinion articles, or op eds, for news media to share. Sometimes they are certified experts, sometimes they are everyday people who feel strongly about an issue. These brief essays can help the audience better understand a complicated issue or help them relate to something they haven't personally experienced. These pieces can be extremely powerful and persuasive.

If you would like assistance reviewing, drafting, editing, or pitching an op-ed to newspapers, reach out to someone on the communications team. We are happy to help!

### FORMS OF PERSUASION (USE ONE OR MORE):

- **Personal Experience:** The writer describes an experience he or she has had.
- **Expert Opinion:** The writer draws on the opinion of an expert—someone trained in a particular area, or someone who has relevant personal experience.
- **Example:** The writer provides an example that supports a larger idea or pattern.
- **Analogy:** The writer compares the situation to another similar situation.
- **Facts and Statistics:** The writer uses facts or numbers to prove their idea. Often this information comes from other sources, such as books, newspapers, or websites.
- **Logic:** The writer uses reasoning or logic to argue their point.
- **Emotion:** The writer makes an emotional appeal to the reader.

### I. INTRODUCTION

- a. **Hook:** The beginning is your chance to capture your reader's attention. What can you start with that will compel your audience to pay attention? Perhaps an anecdote or surprising fact?
- b. **Context:** Now back up a little bit. Explain what the issue is at hand. In a few lines, provide some background and context.
- c. **Thesis:** Finally, make an argument. Tell your reader where you stand on this issue.



# TRADITIONAL MEDIA (cont.)

### II. FIRST BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Evidence #1:** Describe the central piece of evidence that supports your position.
- b. **Tie Back:** Make sure to connect this evidence back to your main argument, explaining to readers how it supports your thesis statement.

### III. SECOND BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Evidence #2:** Describe a second piece of evidence that supports your position. Try using a different type of persuasion (see list below).
- b. **Tie Back:** Again, make sure to connect this evidence back to your main argument, explaining to readers how it supports your thesis statement.

### IV. THIRD BODY PARAGRAPH

- a. **Counter Argument:** What would be the main argument of the opposing side?
- b. **Rebuttal:** What is your response to this argument? Why doesn't it apply to this situation/context?

### V. CONCLUSION

- a. **Summary:** In just a few lines, remind your reader of the main argument and evidence.
- b. **Thesis:** No need to repeat your thesis word-for-word but remind readers what you're arguing and why they should care.
- c. **Personal Comment, Call to Action, or Question:** The last few sentences of your essay will linger in your reader's mind? What do you want to leave them with?

When submitted an opinion article, include a photo and a brief 1-2 sentence biography for the news outlet to publish along side your piece.

# TESTIMONY

## TELL YOUR STORY

Have you even wondered who the people are who sit in front of lawmakers in Frankfort to talk about issues affecting our communities? They're everyday Kentuckians who are passionate about making Kentucky a better place for their families, helping communities thrive, and moving Kentucky forward.

Anyone can testify at a committee hearing in Frankfort. Committee hearings are where bills are discussed and voted on, so they can move from their committee assignment to the full legislative chambers. Amendments and bill language can change all the way up to the full vote, and testimony can influence legislators' opinions on how our laws should read.

Everyone is passionate about something, and Kentucky's General Assembly conducts business in committee hearings with real-world implications for everyone who lives here. And while it may seem like a lot of work to prepare testimony, travel to Frankfort, and spend time in a hearing room waiting for lawmakers to hear from us, it is vital to our democracy.

Take the "Safer" Kentucky Act, for example. Lawmakers need to hear from people who will be impacted by the myriad of laws contained in this bill. People of color and Kentuckians from marginalized communities that are overpoliced, people who have experienced incarceration, and people who work alongside these populations are all potential voices for testimony. Lawmakers can only work with the information they have, and if the people of Kentucky don't talk about how bills will impact them, the legislature will write the laws governing our people without the complete picture.

If you're interested in testifying in Frankfort, let us know! We can help draft, edit, and polish your testimony and even attend the hearing with you (as long as we have available staff that day). See the Contact page at the end of this toolkit.

# SCRIPTS

## CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR

Every call counts! When you call legislators to tell them how you would like them to vote on a certain bill, they receive a physical piece of green or red paper, representing your view. Many lawmakers say they are influenced by how many green or red slips they receive. These slips are what make phone calls so effective.

Calling the legislative message line is toll-free and only takes a few minutes. Call every day if you have the time. You don't even have to know your legislators' names but be prepared to share your address so operators can send your message to the right place.

**1-800-372-7181**

## TELEPHONE SCRIPT

My name is [NAME] and I am your constituent. I am calling to voice my strong opposition to HB 5, the "Safer Kentucky Act," and urge you to take up legislation that will invest in Kentucky communities. Thank you.

## EMAIL SCRIPT

My name is [NAME] and I am your constituent. I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the HB 5, the "Safer Kentucky Act," and urge you to take up legislation that will invest in Kentucky communities. Thank you.



## CONTACT US

Our work and our democracy depend on participation from all Kentuckians. Help protect democracy in the commonwealth and make your voice heard.

### COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

[communications@aclu-ky.org](mailto:communications@aclu-ky.org)

Angela Cooper  
Communications Director

Kira Meador  
Graphic Designer

Taylor Killough  
Communications Manager

### CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATOR

The Legislative Research Commission was created in 1948 as a fact-finding and service agency. The Commission operates as the administrative and research arm of the General Assembly.

At the LRC website, you can find out who your legislator is, see who has filed bills, read the draft of bills under consideration, view committee schedules and agendas, and more!

### LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE: 1-800-372-7181

### LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION

<https://www.legislature.ky.gov>

### LIVE LEGISLATIVE COVERAGE ON KET

Kentucky Educational Television — KET — is Kentucky's largest classroom, serving more than two million people each week via television, online, and mobile.

Most Kentuckians can't travel to Frankfort to testify or meet in person with legislators. KET live streams committee hearings and activity on the House and Senate floors for free, so anyone can watch and listen to the issues being discussed first-hand. Learn more at [www.ket.org](http://www.ket.org).