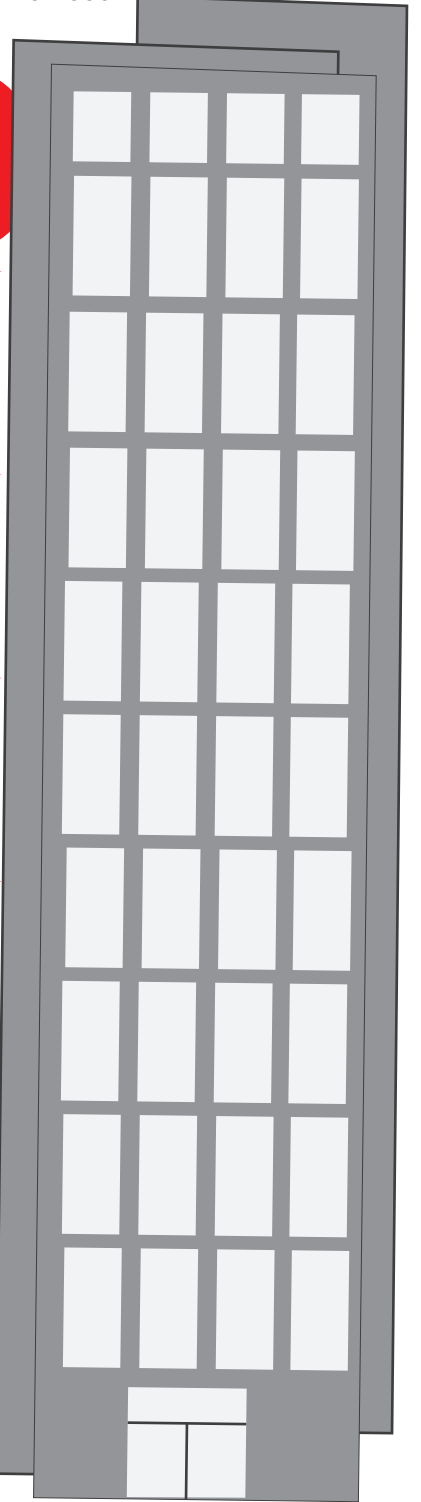# Reformist reforms vs. abolitionist steps to end IMPRISONMENT

This poster is a tool to assess and understand differences between reforms that strengthen imprisonment and abolitionist steps that reduce its overall impact and grow other possibilities for wellbeing. As we work to dismantle incarceration in all its forms, we must resist common reforms that create or expand cages anywhere, including under the guise of "addressing needs" or as "updated" replacements. Jails and prisons deprive communities of resources like medical and mental health care, transportation, food, and housing. In our fights, it is critical to uplift and strategically contribute to movements led by imprisoned people, both to address pressing conditions and for abolition. In all decarceration strategies, we must utilize tactics that will improve life for those most affected and make space to build the worlds we need.

DOES THIS...	reduce the number of people imprisoned, under surveillance, or under other forms of state control?	reduce the reach of jails, prisons, and surveillance in our everyday lives?	create resources and infrastructures that are steady, preventative, and accessible without police and prison guard contact?	strengthen capacities to prevent or address harm and create processes for community accountability?
Building jails or prisons to address overcrowding or rising numbers of "new" prisoners (for example, migrants)	**NO.** If they build it, they will fill it! Building more jails and prisons creates more cages, period!	**NO.** Building more jails and prisons increases the reach of the PIC and prison and jail infrastructures. Creating more cages means building something we have to tear down later.	**NO.** Adding cages takes away state and local funding and resources that could be directed to community-led infrastructures.	**NO.** Building more prisons and jails entrenches the carceral logic of accountability. They are sites that perpetuate violence and harm.
Building "closer to home," or as "nicer," "modern," "rehabilitative" alternatives to existing jails or prisons	**NO.** The history of the prison is a history of reform. New jails and prisons that are proposed as improvements on existing sites or buildings expand the arguments for and lengthen the life of imprisonment.	**NO.** There is no such thing as a "humane" cage. Construction under the pretense of addressing the harms that imprisonment reinforces the logics of using cages as a solution for social, economic, and political issues.	**NO.** Arguments for jails "closer to home" reinforce the idea that jails and police create "safety" and take away the capacity to build resources that can create well-being.	**NO.** Prisons and jails do not enable accountability. They are sites that perpetuate violence and harm.
Building jails / prisons that focus on "providing services" to address the needs of specific "populations"	**NO.** Life-affirming resources cannot be provided in spaces of imprisonment. These "services" do not decrease numbers of imprisoned people - they keep specific populations of people imprisoned.	**NO.** Building jails and prisons that lock up specific populations expands the reach of imprisonment by normalizing the idea that care can and should be coupled with policing and imprisonment.	**NO.** The argument for these jails and prisons is that they provide specialized services through policing, imprisonment, and control. Environments of control and violence cannot provide care.	**NO.** Prisons and jails do not enable accountability. They are sites that perpetuate violence and harm, and solidify oppressive social expectations around gender, sexuality, and mental health.
Legislative and other efforts to single out some conviction categories as "exceptions"	**NO.** This strategy entrenches the idea that anybody "deserves" or "needs" to be locked up. Prioritizing only some people for release justifies expansion.	**NO.** By doubling-down on the "need" for some people to be locked up, these efforts strengthen and expand the reach of prisons, jails, and the PIC.	**NO.** Manufacturing divisions between imprisoned people, as more or less "dangerous," limits our ability to create real supports and resources that sustain all people.	**NO.** These efforts reinscribe the idea that some people are "risks" to society and others "deserve another chance," strengthening logics of punishment without engaging the context of how harms happen.
Use of electronic monitoring (home-arrest) and other law enforcement-led "alternatives" to jails and prisons.	**NO.** Electronic monitoring is a form of state control. It escalates the frequency of contact with the PIC for all members of a household, increasing the vulnerability of people already subject to policing and surveillance.	**NO.** Monitoring brings the prison, jail, or detention center into a person's home, turning it into a space of incarceration, which takes both a psychological and a financial toll.	**NO.** E-carceration means that regular daily movements are constantly linked to threats of arrest. This does not allow people to build and maintain community.	**NO.** E-carceration extends the violence and harm of imprisonment into people's homes and everyday lives. Nothing about electronic monitoring creates systems of accountability or healing.
Public / private "partnerships" to contract services that replicate conditions of imprisonment	**NO.** These services move people from one locked facility into another facility often with similar rules and with the threat of jail or prison looming.	**NO.** This expands the reach of imprisonment, by adding to the larger system. This is particularly the case where the partnerships replicate and expand logics and rules of jails and prisons, as opposed to intentionally challenging them.	**NO.** These programs require moving through the policing and court systems to access any services that might be available there.	**NO.** Court mandated / police-run "justice" processes hold similar threats for participants as the broader PIC. They do not necessarily include meaningful processes for creating accountability or tools for preventing future harm.

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Decarceration - or reducing the number of people in prisons and jails	**YES.** Decarceration takes people out of prisons and jails, and out of direct state control, with the aim of supporting people to stay outside.	**YES.** By de-prioritizing and de-legitimizing jails, prisons, and related systems we reduce the common-sense idea that they are necessary and/or "effective".	**YES.** As part of abolitionist organizing we must focus on getting people out while building strong infrastructures of support.	**YES.** When we work to diminish carceral logic, we can pair our work toward decarceration with other ways of responding to and preventing harm. Investing in one will grow our capacities for the other.
Shutting down existing jails and prisons and not replacing them	**YES.** By reducing the number of cages, we can reduce the number of people inside.	**YES.** When we close a jail or prison and do not replace it with other carceral systems, we chip away at the idea that cages address social, political, and economic problems.	**YES,** when we organize for it. When we fight to close jails and prisons we can open the way to defund imprisonment and invest in infrastructures locally that support and sustain people. Abolition is also a BUILDING strategy.	**YES.** Our work to close prisons and jails and keep them closed is one step toward shifting the focus to addressing and preventing harm without violence and putting resources into that work.
Rejecting government spending for jail and prison construction, renovation, expansion	**YES.** Nearly all spending projects include enhancements that support arguments for the "benefits" of incarceration.	**YES.** By rejecting spending on jails and prisons, we counter the common-sense argument that they are necessary and reduce the system's reach.	**YES.** When we reject funding for jails and prisons this can create opportunities to defund imprisonment and invest in infrastructures locally that support and sustain people.	**YES.** When we reject funding for jails and prisons this can create opportunities to defund imprisonment and invest in infrastructures locally that support and sustain people.
Reducing policing and police contact in general, and "quality of life" policing, specifically	**YES.** Policing feeds imprisonment, and is an important part of systems of control. Reducing police contact reduces the number of people caught in the criminal legal system.	**YES.** Policing is a justification for imprisonment. By reducing police contact, the legitimacy and power of jails and prisons can be reduced.	**YES.** When we fight to reduce police contact and funding, we can free up state resources. We can organize allocation to community-led infrastructures that are decoupled from policing. We must eliminate all forms of policing from social and community services.	**YES.** Policing does not prevent harm, but actually causes it. Fighting to reduce policing provides opportunities for communities to invest in systems that prevent harm and create accountability.
Creating voluntary, accessible, community-run services and infrastructures	**YES.** Access to services that address needs people articulate for themselves can reduce vulnerability to police contact and prevent harm, while building sites for self-determination.	**YES.** Voluntary services that are community-led and -informed take power away from jails and prisons by removing the focus on imprisonment as a solution to social, economic, and political issues.	**YES.** When we create services and infrastructures that are de-coupled from policing and imprisonment we develop systems with the potential to engage with people's complex needs in consistent and trust-building ways.	**YES.** People getting their needs met in community- determined and -led ways prevents harm. By bolstering resources that address harm, without replicating harm, we create opportunities for community accountability, not punishment and isolation.