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SURVIVORS OF “THE WORKHOUSE” AND ALLIES LAUNCH THE “CLOSE THE WORKHOUSE” CAMPAIGN TO PERMANENTLY CLOSE THE CITY’S INFAMOUSLY HELLISH JAIL AND DECARCERATE STL

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI - JULY 4, 2018 - Survivors of St. Louis City’s Medium Security Institution, “the Workhouse,” and their allies commemorate the 4th of July by launching a new campaign to Close the Workhouse. On a day that celebrates justice, freedom, and liberty, hundreds rallied to demand that the city permanently shut down the notoriously hellish Workhouse, reduce the number of people in St. Louis jails, and redirect jail spending to support services in the city’s impacted communities.

“The Campaign to Close the Workhouse calls on Mayor Krewson to order the Workhouse closed, for Circuit Attorney Gardner to stop criminalizing poverty and locking up people for failure to pay cash bail, and for Board of Aldermen to invest in our communities instead of jails,” said Michelle Higgins, Close the Workhouse Lead Organizer. The City of St. Louis spends over 16 million dollars operating the jail, in contrast to less than 1 million on social services and programming.

“The conditions in the Workhouse were unbearable The whole time I was there I was suffering. I lost 10 pounds in five days,” said Gerald Wortham, a St. Louisan and member of the Close the Workhouse campaign.

“In the Workhouse, I felt hopeless. “That place is where they send you when they throw you away.” said Inez Bordeaux, a Close the Workhouse campaign member.

“We don’t need temporary plans, we need permanent solutions. Our organizations have spent the last year building with communities impacted by our egregious bail and incarceration system and the demand is clear. Closing the Workhouse and decarcerating our city is a long overdue step towards justice and freedom for Black and poor residents of this city,” said Kayla Reed, Action - St. Louis.

For decades, St. Louis has condemned thousands of innocent people to suffer in the inhumane conditions in the Workhouse while awaiting trial, unable to afford cash bail. Approximately 90% of the 600 people detained in the Workhouse on a given day are pre-trial, incarcerated for an average of 291 days, and additionally lose their housing, jobs and vehicles and pressured to plea while they are detained. The Campaign to Close the Workhouse is led by people directly impacted by the St. Louis criminal legal system, with support from Action-St. Louis, Arch City

Defenders, MORE/Decarcerate STL, the Bail Project, and more than 25 organizations across St. Louis. In November 2017, ArchCity Defenders filed a class action lawsuit against the City over the unconstitutional conditions at the jail. The case is still pending and can be found [here](#).

For more information on the campaign to Close the Workhouse, visit www.closetheworkhouse.org.

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