Statement from Carol A. Siemon, Ingham County Prosecutor
Sept. 17, 2021, 1:30 pm

During my tenure as the prosecutor, I’ve worked to reform the system, consistent with the approach that we have had since first joining the campaign in 2016 and advocating “progressive changes in the criminal justice system.”

During my first term in office, the number of persons imprisoned from Ingham County was reduced by 37%. At the same time, though, we saw that among the population of those whose cases were handled by our office, we have had the same racial disparity – for example, the 12 percent of the population that is Black continues to make up 40 percent of our cases. Shrinking the system – decarceration – is not enough by itself.

Working with the Vera Institute of Justice, the Metro Lansing Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation project, and others, we are taking a closer look at the policies and the types of cases that create racial disparity. There is a movement for progressive changes in the system, and the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police brought the issues to focus. The voices of protest and calls for change have energized and inspired us to do more and do better to create real justice.

I believe there are public safety considerations that encompass not only jailing and incarcerating offenders, but also limiting the kinds of inappropriate stops and searches of Black Americans that also have public safety consequences.

I’ve read this correspondence and appreciate these views. At the same time, I have a responsibility to lead the prosecutor’s office and have been twice chosen to do so by the people of Ingham County. The policies that we have developed were research-based and we will continue to incorporate ongoing data into the development of future policies. We have developed an ongoing set of reforms – addressing public safety, mass incarceration, and racial equity - and I can assure the public that we are not going to reverse course on bringing about change.