



# POST-SUMMIT REPORT

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## OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

On February 16, 2024, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) hosted the Inaugural Louisiana Public Safety Summit at the Hilton Capitol Center in downtown Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Summit convened nearly 80 legislative, legal, law enforcement, business, and community leaders to discuss the current state of public safety in Louisiana and the impending second extraordinary legislative session focusing strictly on criminal justice, which began on February 19, 2024. The Summit was free of charge to attendees.

The one-day Summit offered attendees valuable insights, dialogue, and actionable solutions based on facts and data in the areas of juvenile justice, rehabilitation & reentry programs, pretrial supervision, data improvement, and partnerships to enhance public safety. The Summit also served as a catalyst for galvanizing a collaborative network of data-guided subject matter experts (SME) working locally and statewide to improve Louisiana's criminal justice system.



### CJCC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In his opening remarks, Chris Csonka, the Executive Director of CJCC, conveyed optimism about the Summit's potential to educate Louisiana leaders and stakeholders in navigating decisions on proposed legislative changes for the upcoming special session on criminal justice. Csonka emphasized CJCC's commitment as a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to assisting criminal justice agencies in developing and implementing effective policies aimed at improving public safety.



### MAYOR-PRESIDENT SHARON WESTON BROOME

Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome welcomed attendees to the City of Baton Rouge and discussed examples of her administration's ongoing efforts to improve public safety and create a more efficient justice process in Baton Rouge. She also emphasized the importance of ensuring community voice and perspective was included in her efforts. The Mayor-President closed by speaking of her three-pronged approach to improving public safety: supporting law enforcement, community-based violence prevention, and addressing mental health needs.



### LOUISIANA ATTORNEY GENERAL LIZ MURRILL

Attorney General Liz Murrill spoke to the attendees about how the special session on crime is the time to come together to bring safety to our communities and justice for victims. Murrill informed the attendees that the high Louisiana crime rate (second in the nation per capita) is being driven by flaws in the current education system, which directly correlates to increased juvenile violence.

## DR. JAMES AUSTIN PRESENTS: Forecasting Louisiana Crime Rates



Dr. James Austin, keynote speaker from the [JFA Institute](#), delivered a presentation titled “[Forecasting Louisiana Crime Rates](#)”, The presentation explored national and state trends in crime, arrests, and incarceration spanning the past 60 years. Dr. Austin summarized recent data on crime rates, arrests, and prison populations both nationally and in Louisiana. Noteworthy findings included a reported decline in both crime rates and incarceration in Louisiana.

According to Dr. Austin, a specific demographic group – young males ages 15 to 27 – contributed to approximately 7,000 arrests in Louisiana in 2023. He hypothesized that a significant reduction in crime could be achieved if we could intervene and deter this demographic group from committing crime. He also discussed the impact of factors such as inflation and declining birth rates on crime rates.

Dr. Austin highlighted a surge in crime during the pandemic which occurred locally and nationally. He noted that crime rates have since nearly reverted to pre-pandemic levels both nationally and in Louisiana.

In response to the inquiry, Dr. Austin shared his perspective that proposed legislative changes for a special criminal justice session are unlikely to lead to a further reduction in crime rates, drawing on his knowledge of similar tough-on-crime laws implemented in the past. However, he cautioned that such measures could potentially result in a significant increase in the state's prison population over time.



## MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION

The Summit included two “Breakout Sessions” taken place in the late morning and one in the afternoon, where attendees had the opportunity to have discussions focusing on specific topics around public safety.

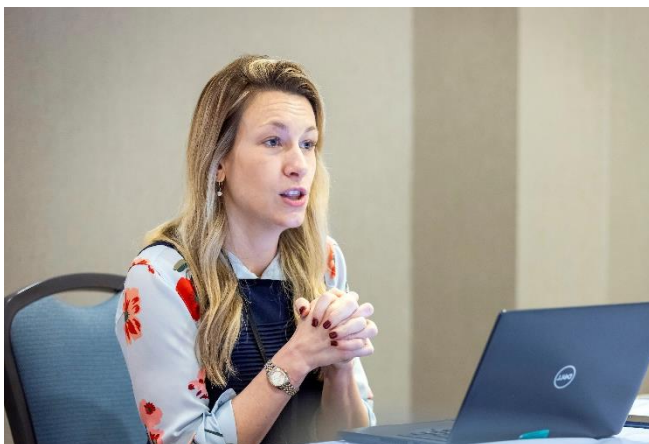
### Partnerships to Improve Public Safety



Eric Dexter (pictured top right), with the [Baton Rouge Area Foundation](#) and Clay Young (pictured above), with Clay Young Enterprises, served as the facilitators for this breakout session. Young discussed the importance of strengthening partnerships that enhance public safety and emphasized the critical role of collaboration among law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and business leaders. The group discussed the importance of fostering trust and communication between philanthropic and law enforcement entities to address multifaceted public safety challenges. Discussions centered on strategies such as community policing initiatives, task forces, and information-sharing platforms to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in crime prevention and response efforts. Participants considered ways to leverage technology and data-driven approaches while also emphasizing the significance of community engagement and outreach programs to build stronger, safer neighborhoods statewide.



### Rehabilitation & Reentry Programs: Success or Failure?



Natalie Laborde (pictured left), Executive Counsel, Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections, led a group discussion covering an overview of [Louisiana’s Justice Reinvestment Reforms 2023 Annual Performance Report](#). The breakout session also delved into new legislation slated for introduction during the special session on criminal justice, particularly focusing on its potential impact on good time, parole, and reentry programs.

## Pretrial Supervision: Creating a Statewide Standard



East Baton Rouge District Attorney Hillar Moore (pictured top left) and Niles Haymer (pictured top right), Deputy Director of CJCC, facilitated a group discussion on the current state of pretrial supervision in Louisiana, with a specific focus on electronic monitoring. Haymer provided insights into how pretrial supervision is currently managed within the justice system, predating legislation passed the previous year. D.A. Moore discussed a [recent law](#) mandating the development of statewide standards for private vendors who provide electronic monitoring services to the courts. Additionally, Moore announced the formation of a state-level committee tasked with creating guidelines applicable to all private vendors operating in the electronic monitoring industry.

## Using Data to Inform and Improve the Justice System



Jermaine Guillory (pictured left), Chief Administrator for the East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office, and Dominic Testino, Research Associate with the justice data firm [Measures for Justice](#), served as facilitators for this breakout session. The conversation highlighted the risks associated with agencies keeping data isolated in silos. The development of [Commons](#), a data dashboard tool, was highlighted for its role in allowing the public to monitor activities within the local criminal justice system. Guillory provided further insight into how the

EBR DA's Office utilizes Commons, explaining its ability to reveal case trends and thereby enhance transparency and accountability. Testino discussed Measures for Justice's contribution to assisting communities and their institutions in developing data tools aimed at reshaping the how the justice system works. Additionally, the discussion pointed out the lack of a centralized platform in Baton Rouge, other than the Mayor-President's [EBRGIS Open Data](#), where the public can access community-related information. Ultimately, it was concluded that the transparency offered by Commons aligns with the objectives of the new Governor's crime session bill.

## Lunch Panel Discussion – The Juvenile Offender Crisis: Addressing the Surge

One of the highlights of the Summit was the panel discussion on the topic of juvenile justice. Panelists included were (listed from left to right) Judge Adam Haney, East Baton Rouge Juvenile Court, Hillar Moore, East Baton Rouge District Attorney, Curtis Nelson, former Director of the Office of Juvenile Justice, and Richard Pittman, Deputy Public Defender - Director of Juvenile Defender Services.



**Panelists were asked a series of questions which included:**

- Do you believe juvenile crime has dramatically increased?
- Do you think repealing Raise the Age will help in reducing juvenile crime?
- What are your thoughts on the problems Louisiana has seen with housing certain juvenile offenders in the local detention centers, such as escaping?
- What are parents’ obligations when their children engage in juvenile crime?
- What are the opportunities in Louisiana to address juvenile crime?
- One recommendation that you make to reduce juvenile crime in Louisiana.

By the conclusion of the discussion, there was a shared agreement that to effectively address juvenile crime (1) more robust interventions at the grade school levels need to be deployed (2) more focus on reducing truancy and connecting families to services and (3) Louisiana urgently needs to build regional juvenile detention facilities to ease the burden on local jurisdictions grappling with the challenge of housing accused violent juveniles awaiting trial. There was also consensus among the panelist that repealing [Raise the Age](#) would do little to decrease or deter violent juvenile crime.

## AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION

Summit attendees were given the opportunity of engaging in group discussions focused on three justice-related questions. They were asked to identify current problems within the justice system and suggest potential solutions. Below are the three questions and the attendees’ responses. Once the breakout session concluded, attendees gathered in the main room to compare and discuss the groups’ responses.

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| <b><i>Question: How can Louisiana do a better job collecting criminal justice data and sharing said data with state &amp; local justice stakeholders as well as the public-at-large?</i></b> |
| Louisiana faces challenges in collecting and sharing criminal justice data due to fragmented systems and lack of investment.   |
| Urgent need for a centralized database statewide, with investment in data structures.  |
| Emphasize two-way data communication and prioritize fairness in decision-making.   |
| Success stories from New Orleans with significant investments in centralized systems.  |
| Advocate for a person-centered approach and public accessibility of data.  |
| Importance of sharing protocols to avoid fear-mongering and promoting data-driven decisions.   |
| Calls for budget allocation reflecting values and legislation for data accuracy and accountability.  |

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| Visit other jurisdictions that are collecting and sharing justice data well.   |
| <b>Question: How can Louisiana build better partnerships with philanthropy, businesses, and communities to improve public safety/reduce crime?</b> |
| Seek partnerships aligned with long-term improvement goals.  |
| Include public education and engage impacted communities in solution finding.  |
| Empower community leaders to voice needs and bridge communication gaps.  |
| Prioritize understanding and empathy in decision-making processes.   |
| Enhance interagency collaboration and accountability through legislative measures.   |
| Create more opportunities for philanthropy, business, and community to collaborate on initiatives.   |
| <b>Question: What are some of the ways of addressing juvenile justice issues raised in today's panel discussion?</b>                               |
| Focus on identification, prevention, and intervention strategies.  |
| Address root causes of juvenile involvement in the justice system, such as poverty and education.  |
| Explore innovative funding models like fines/fees from represented individuals.  |
| Rethink approaches to reaching and supporting youth, emphasizing values and respect.   |
| Promote authenticity, collectivism, and data-driven policies.  |
| Leverage existing legislation and initiatives for juvenile justice improvement.  |
| Implement long-term plans integrating early education and addressing truancy.  |
| Establish partnerships with entities like the National Guard for disciplinary programs.  |

## Recommendations and Takeaways

After hearing from the speakers, the panel discussion, and breakout sessions, many attendees felt as though investment in regional juvenile facilities in Louisiana was important for the new Governor and legislature to aim their focus. There were continued questions whether the previewed repeal of many of the reforms in 2017 as a part of the Justice Reinvestment Act would have the intended impact of decreasing violent crime in Louisiana.

Based on post-Summit survey responses, attendees indicated strong interest in attending future summits that focus on data, diversion, and reentry. The CJCC plans to hold another Summit in early 2025 prior to the regular legislative session starting. Summit committee members will begin planning for the next summit in late summer 2024. If you would like to serve on the 2025 Summit Planning Committee, please contact [ccsonka@ebrcjcc.org](mailto:ccsonka@ebrcjcc.org).



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