

## Challenge

In 2016 the Illinois state legislature passed a law regulating the use of electronic monitoring. The new legislation declared tampering with the device a felony, and encouraged county and state authorities to charge daily user fees for individuals on an electronic monitor. The exact rules and conditions of monitoring are largely left up to the parole division of the Illinois Department of Corrections, judges and county authorities.

Most people released on parole are placed on an electronic monitor, most commonly an ankle shackle, for 60 to 90 days. During that time, they are confined to house arrest and are only allowed to leave for a limited number of hours on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Organizations such as FirstFollowers, which helps people returning home from prison in Champaign, view these overly punitive rules as a barrier to the reentry process.

In one documented case, an individual on parole was confined to house arrest for two years because he violated an order of protection. FirstFollowers' investigation revealed that although his order of protection had expired, the Illinois Department of Corrections mandated him four years of house arrest with GPS monitoring, which severely limited his ability to leave home. As a result, he lost out on job offers and was unable to work during those years.

## Action

FirstFollowers took this case, and those of others who were fed up with the punitive electronic monitoring regimes, to their State Representative, Carol Ammons. In consultation with community organizations and drawing directly from #ChallengingEcarceration's guidelines, Rep. Ammons drafted a bill to address some key concerns about electronic monitoring. The bill would amend previous legislation to allow individuals on a device to leave their home daily for a minimum of 8 hours. It would also eliminate lifetime GPS monitoring, and prevent state and county authorities from charging individuals fees for being placed on a monitor. The bill would credit individuals released on pretrial for time served on a device. The bill was introduced in the spring of 2017 but did not make it past a committee hearing.

## Insights

The draft legislation opened up new debate on electronic monitoring and parole in the state legislature. The process showed how community groups could use the stories of critically impacted individuals in the community to lay a foundation for policies and legislation that help reduce the harm done by draconian parole conditions such as electronic monitoring. It helped raise the possibility for the abolition of these conditions.

## About Us

#ChallengingEcarceration is a project led by James Kilgore of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center in partnership with the Center for Media Justice. #ChallengingEcarceration aims to change the story and policies that affect the lives of people living under electronic monitoring. This project will put advocates of criminal justice and immigration reform in a better position to restrict and abolish the use of electronic monitors.

## Contact Us

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