April 23, 2025

To: Interested Parties
From: ACLU
Re: NC Voters Support Crime Prevention Over Punishment

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), YouGov fielded a survey of 600 registered voters in February 2025. This poll finds that voters in North Carolina prefer solutions that address the root causes of crime and support moving away from over-policing and criminalizing communities—which they don't see as making communities safer. The following are key findings from the poll:

- **Voters are more concerned with economic issues than crime.** Voters are most concerned about inflation and the cost of living (31 percent), presidential abuse of power (22 percent), immigration (15 percent), and jobs and the economy (13 percent). *Only 3 percent of voters identified crime and public safety as the most important issue.*
- **Voters want solutions that tackle the root causes of crime by improving access to mental health care, addiction treatment, and other resources.** They believe that increasing access to mental healthcare and addiction treatment (88 percent), addressing poverty, economic despair, and lack of opportunities (83 percent), and sending mental health specialists instead of the police to respond to mental health and addiction crises (65 percent) would help improve safety in their communities more than a little.
- **Voters don't believe prisons make communities safe and that we should prioritize rehabilitation over incarceration.** 63 percent say that an over-reliance on prisons causes many of the problems that lead to unsafe communities and 67 percent say we should prioritize rehabilitation over incarceration to safely reduce the prison population. A strong majority of voters (62 percent) say that it is very or somewhat important to reduce the jail and prison population in the US.
- **Voters support changing how police enforce non-safety traffic violations**. Though most voters have not heard of laws to limit police enforcement on minor traffic violations, 71 percent say that they would support such a law in their state and 55 percent of voters say that the police should focus on serious violations, such as speeding and drunk driving, instead of minor violations.
- **Voters are concerned about funding cuts to essential programs.** 58 percent of voters are concerned that President Trump is going too far in slashing the federal government, eliminating important programs and critical services that many Americans rely on.

Safety Proposals:
Most voters support reducing the prison population:

- 63 percent believe that an over reliance on prisons causes unsafe communities, and 67% percent believe we should prioritize bipartisan efforts to promote rehabilitation over incarceration and safely reduce the size of the prison population.
- 62 percent say that it is very or somewhat important to reduce the jail and prison population in the US, especially Black voters (80 percent), liberal voters (87 percent), 18-34-year-olds (75 percent) 35-49-year-olds (69 percent) registered independent voters (60 percent).

- 80 percent of voters strongly or somewhat support increasing the amount of time people can earn off their prison sentence for following prison rules and participating in rehabilitation programs.
- 80 percent of voters strongly or somewhat support making sure everyone is treated as innocent until proven guilty, not just people who can afford bail, by allowing people to await trial in their communities.

Most voters support addressing the root causes of crime:

- 88 percent of voters say that increasing access to mental healthcare and treatment for drug addiction would help improve safety in communities a lot or some, including 96 percent of registered Democrats, 85 percent of registered independents, and 81 percent of registered Republicans.
- 83 percent of voters say that addressing poverty, economic despair, and lack of opportunities would help improve safety in communities a lot or some.
- 75 percent of voters say that the following statement is somewhat or very convincing: To keep people safe, we need to focus on solutions to prevent crime, drug addiction, and homelessness from happening in the first place. We need to invest in reaching people with the resources they need when they need it – instead of sending them to jail and giving them criminal records that make it harder to get a job, housing, or education.

Most voters believe homelessness should be addressed as a resource issue:

- 77 percent of voters say that lack of affordable housing causes homelessness, compared to 23 percent of voters who say that homelessness is caused by people being allowed to live on the street without facing criminal consequences.
- By more than a three-to-one margin, 80 percent of voters say that we need to address homelessness as a resource issue, focusing on improving access to affordable housing, mental health, and addiction services compared to 20 percent of voters who say that we need to address homelessness as a public safety issue, forcing homeless people to leave public spaces or face arrest.

Most voters support public safety solutions beyond police, including sending behavioral health specialists to certain emergency calls:

- 65 percent of voters say that sending mental health and addiction specialists, rather than the police, to calls related to mental health, homelessness, and substance use would help improve safety in communities a lot or some.
- 76 percent of voters, including 92 percent of registered Democrats, 68 percent of registered independents, and 62 percent of registered Republicans, strongly or somewhat support a program to have trained mental health professionals respond to these calls instead – so that police can focus on serious crimes and people in crisis get the appropriate help.
- 77 percent of voters say that the following statement is somewhat or very convincing: Police are not the answer to every problem - they are not social workers or counselors. We shouldn't ask them to fix problems that shouldn't be their job to handle in the first place. We can reduce the burden on police by funding more appropriate first responders for certain emergencies.
- 64 percent of voters, including 70 percent of registered independent voters, strongly or somewhat support ending stop-and-frisk policing.

Most voters support changing how police enforce traffic violations:

- 71 percent of voters strongly or somewhat support limiting or ending police enforcement of certain minor traffic violations to prioritize serious, safety-related offenses and to reduce unnecessary police interactions with drivers, including 80 percent of registered Democrats, 72 percent of registered independents, and 62 percent of registered Republicans.
- 62 percent of voters believe that no longer tasking police with enforcing non-safety traffic violations, allowing them to focus on dangerous driving and solving serious crimes like murder or rape will help some or a lot to improve safety in communities.

Most voters don't believe deporting immigrants makes communities safe:

- 62 percent of voters say that the following statement is somewhat or very convincing: We all deserve to feel safe, but deporting our neighbors and tearing apart families doesn't achieve that—it only makes private prison corporations and their CEOs richer. Politicians should prioritize real solutions to prevent crime and reduce violence. Let's invest in what truly creates safe communities: quality schools, living wages, affordable housing, and increased access to mental health and addiction treatment.