

GEORGIA  
JUSTICE  
PROJECT

# Second Chance for Georgia

2023-24 Georgia Justice Project Policy Agenda







# ABOUT GEORGIA JUSTICE PROJECT



Georgia Justice Project’s mission is to strengthen our community by demonstrating a better way to represent and support individuals in the criminal justice system and reduce barriers to reentry into the community. GJP’s work touches every aspect of the criminal justice continuum with two goals:

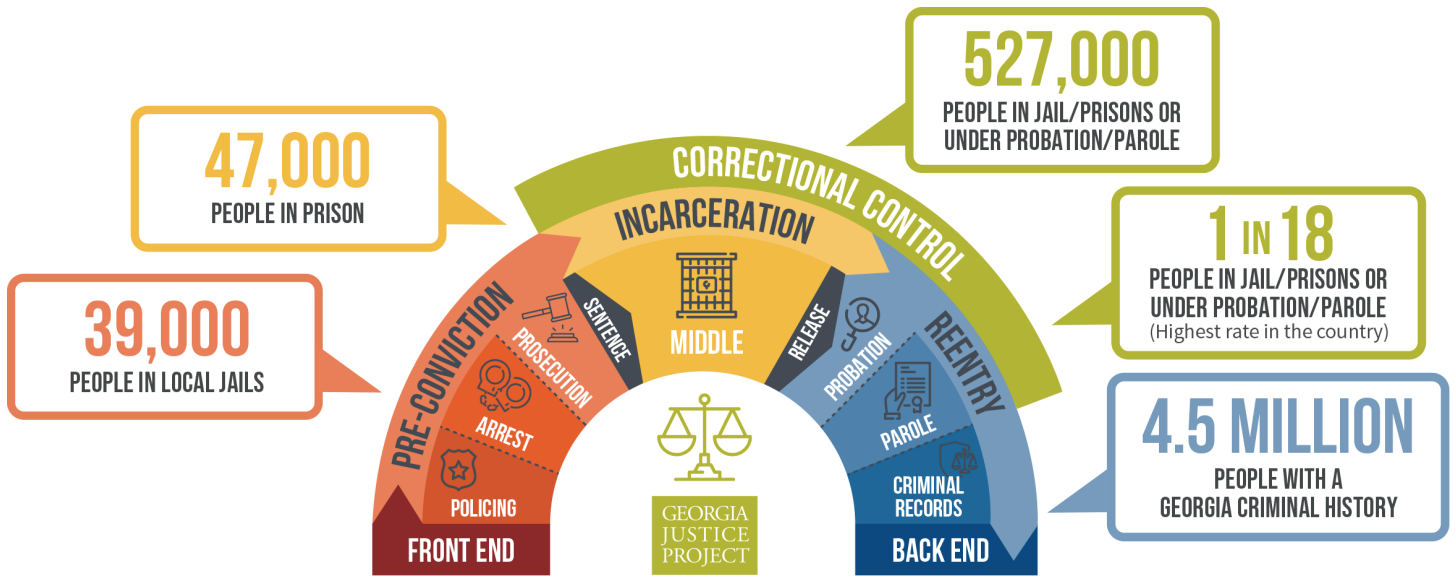
1. Reduce the number of Georgians under correctional control (people in jail/prison or on probation/parole)
2. Reduce reentry barriers for formerly-incarcerated and justice-involved Georgians.

Our work encompasses our three-pronged approach to drive impact: direct service, policy work, and community engagement.

**GJP’s approach (or theory of change) is to simultaneously work on three distinct levels:**

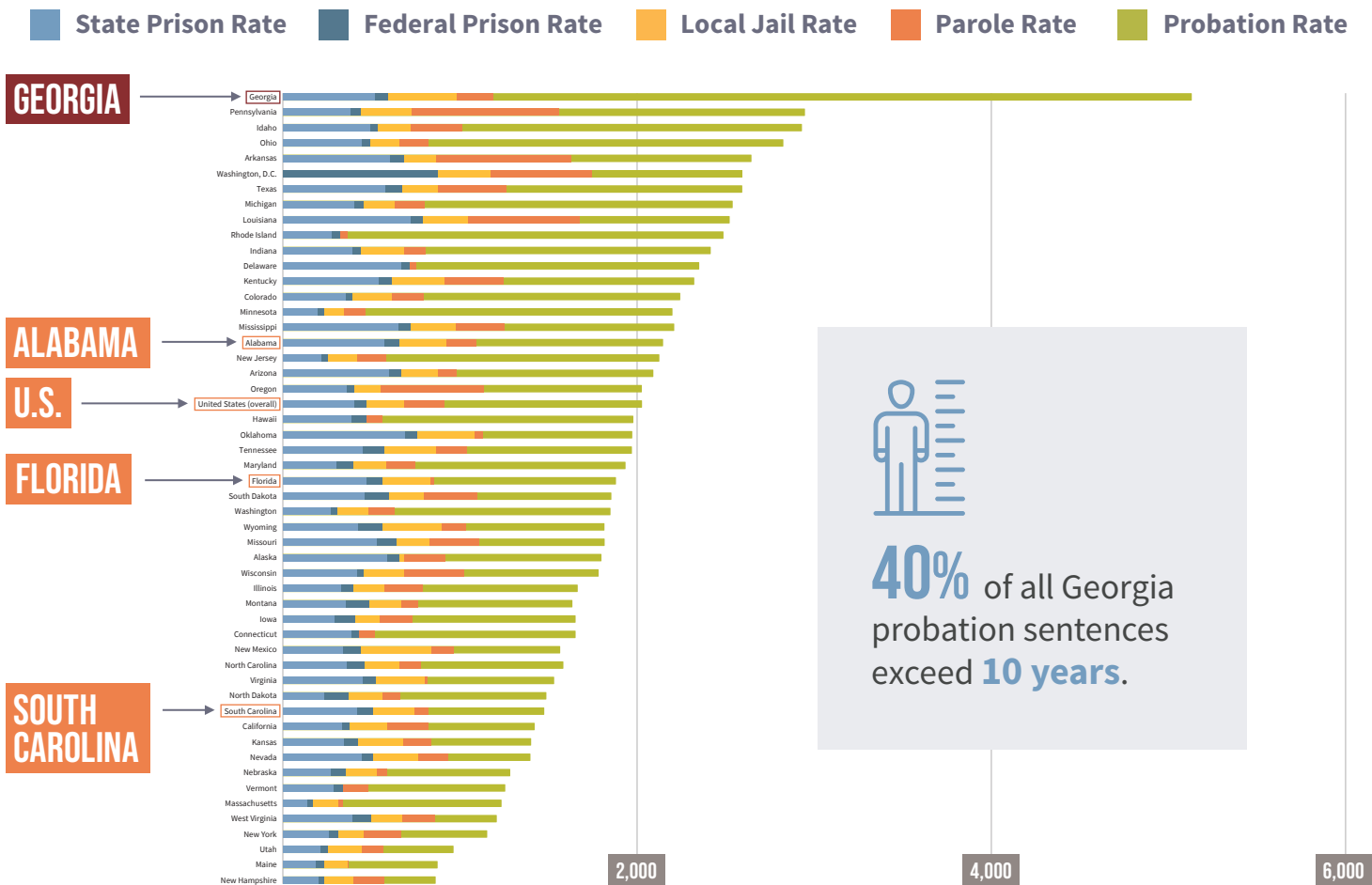


# GEORGIA'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: AN OVERVIEW



## RATES OF CORRECTIONAL CONTROL BY STATE

Source: Prison Policy Initiative  
Rates are per 100,000 total population in that state



# GJP'S APPROACH TO POLICY CHANGE

## ROOTED IN DIRECT SERVICE



Reform efforts flow from decades of holistic individual representation

## BUILDING BRIDGES



Build coalitions of key stakeholders to identify the best path forward

## BIPARTISAN APPROACH



Policies that resonate across the political spectrum

## PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS



Work alongside Georgia corporations and chambers

## PRACTICAL

Real solutions that work on the ground

22 laws changed since 2008



# GJP'S POLICY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## POLICY WORK

Since, 2008, GJP has successfully advocated for 22 changed Georgia laws to increase second chances for Georgians.

### SB 288 2020

Convictions can come off a criminal record **for the first time in Georgia**. **1.5 million** Georgians could potentially benefit.

### SB 105 2021

Creates a pathway for early termination of felony probation sentences. **40,000** Georgians became eligible upon signing.

### SB 10 2022

Reduces automatic driver's license suspensions and offers a path to license reinstatement for the **100,000+** drivers who lose their license after missing traffic court.

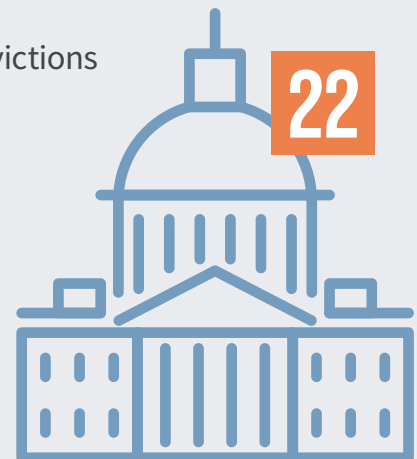
Georgia Justice Project works with state legislators, partner organizations, and other stakeholders to draft bills and advocate for laws that reduce the number of people under correctional control and reduce barriers to reentry for the 4.5 million people who have a Georgia criminal record.

**For a full list of GJP's policy accomplishments, please scan the QR code below.**



GJP's advocacy has supported **22 changes in Georgia law** reducing barriers to reentry, including:

- Retroactive First Offender
- Removal of food stamp ban for people with felony drug convictions
- Tax incentive for parolee hiring
- Ban the box
- Georgia Fair Business Practices Act
- Mugshot removal
- Employer liability protections for second chance hiring
- Other expansions and revisions to Georgia's record clearing laws





GEORGIA  
JUSTICE  
PROJECT



# 2022 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

#GettingGeorgiansBacktoWork

For the third year in a row, Georgia Justice Project (GJP) successfully advocated for reentry reform legislation. GJP's 2022 policy goals were aimed at **#GettingGeorgiansBacktoWork**

SUPPORTED BY



**PASSED**



**SB 10—championed by GJP—went into effect July 1, 2022.**

This law reduces automatic driver's license suspensions and provides a path to reinstatement for people who lost their license for missing traffic court.

## WHY DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSIONS NEED TO BE REFORMED

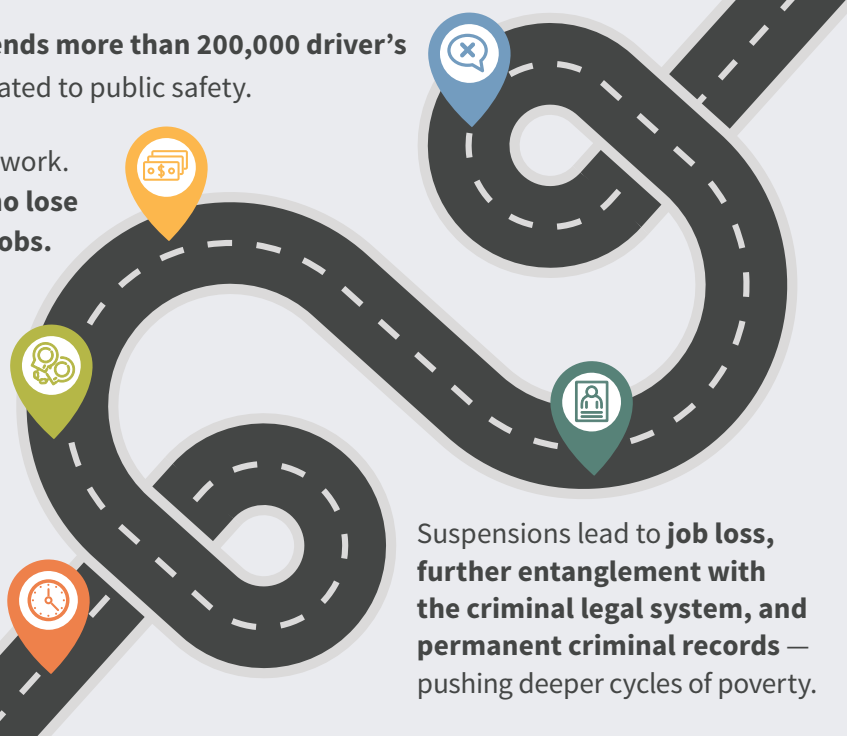


Every year, **Georgia suspends more than 200,000 driver's licenses** for reasons unrelated to public safety.

80% of Georgians drive to work. **Almost half of people who lose their licenses lose their jobs.**

75% of people with suspensions still drive out of necessity, **leading to 50,000 annual arrests for driving on a suspended license** – the #1 reason for arrest. Black drivers are 7 times more likely to be arrested than white drivers in some counties.

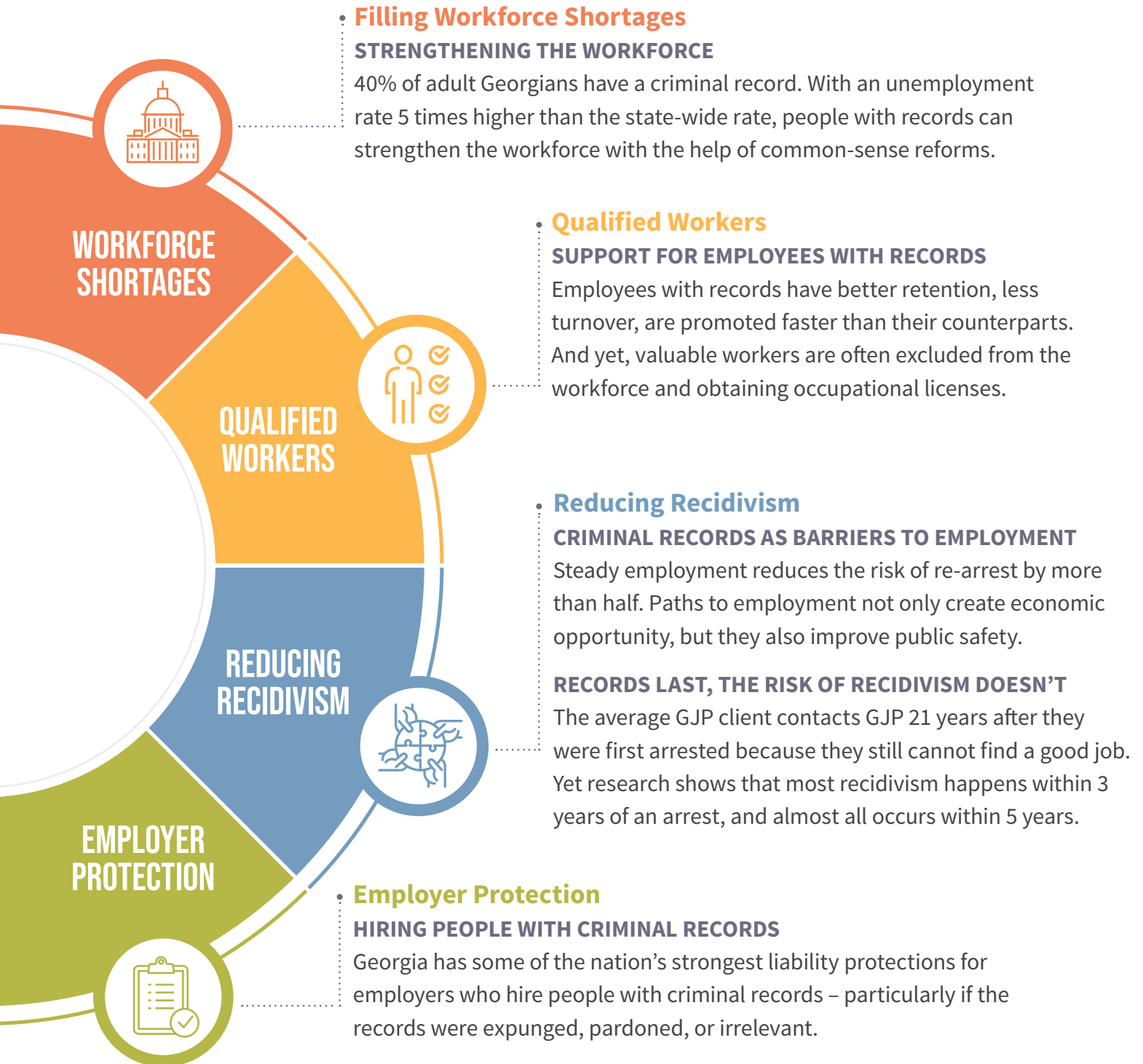
50,000 arrests each year **translates to 450,000 law enforcement hours spent each year** on non-safety related arrests.



Suspensions lead to **job loss, further entanglement with the criminal legal system, and permanent criminal records** — pushing deeper cycles of poverty.

# SECOND CHANCE HIRING

Research shows that employment is the antidote to recidivism. GJP is advocating for legislative change that will enhance public safety, extend opportunity, and strengthen the workforce in a time of shortages.



**GJP is working to dismantle barriers to second chances, strengthen the workforce, and improve public safety. Join us!** \*Sources available upon request.



# CURRENT POLICY AGENDA

## GJP POLICY PRIORITIES

Georgia Justice Project seeks to reduce the number of Georgians who are under correctional control and remove barriers to reentry for formerly justice-involved individuals. Pursuant to this mission, GJP has adopted the following policy priorities for the 2023 legislative session:

### **OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING: Reducing Regulatory Barriers for a Fair Chance (SB 157)**

- 1 in 7 Georgia jobs require an occupational license<sup>1</sup>, including 1 in 4 of Georgia's high-demand jobs<sup>2</sup>. 40% of Georgians have a criminal record and may be barred or discouraged from filling these workforce needs – even if their record is old, pardoned, or expunged.
- Uncertainty discourages candidates from pursuing education for a license because they don't know how their record will be considered, a chilling effect on potential applicants.
- Fair access to licensed jobs reduces recidivism. States with more barriers to licensure for people with records have higher recidivism rates than states with less burdens.
- GA can follow the lead of fellow Southern states by giving these residents a fair chance and boosting the workforce in a time of need.

### **EXPUNGEMENT: Clean Up and Modestly Expand Current Law (HB 334)**

- Studies demonstrate that expungement reduces recidivism<sup>3</sup>, creates opportunity<sup>4</sup>, and strengthens the economy<sup>5</sup>.
- After substantial reforms allowed for expungement of certain convictions in 2020, small issues still need to be cleaned up in order to make the law work better for more Georgians.
- People with otherwise eligible misdemeanor convictions are prevented from accessing the benefits of expungement because current law limits them to two misdemeanor expungements in their life, no matter how old their offenses are or what they have done since.
- More than 80% of Georgia small business owners<sup>6</sup>, and many Chambers of Commerce, support policies to expunge records and open pools of applicants.

### **ENABLING VICTIM-CENTERED PROGRAMS: Evidentiary Privilege (HB 382)**

- Victim-centered programs are options for crime survivors who seek healing through a facilitated process. These programs create a path for accountability and restoration.
- Unlike the traditional criminal legal system, victims overwhelmingly report satisfaction<sup>7</sup> and that their experience in a victim-centered program was fair<sup>8</sup>.
- Participants have dramatically reduced recidivism rates<sup>9</sup>, and those who complete victim-centered programs are more likely to pay restitution<sup>10</sup>.
- Adding a privilege to the evidence code for victim-centered programs would mirror similar privileges and enable these programs to flourish.

*Sources cited in footnotes are available upon request.*

# SUPPORTERS & CONTACT INFO

## CHAMPIONS

KING &  
SPALDING



DELTA

indeed



Georgia Power



Atlanta Gas Light

BANK OF AMERICA



## ADVOCATES

ALSTON  
& BIRD



GP  
Georgia-Pacific

verizon



REINVESTMENT  
FUND

Microsoft

## PROTECTORS

大成 DENTONS

The Coca-Cola Company

## DEFENDERS

BAIN  
& COMPANY

Walmart

Trulieve

BONDURANT  
MIXSON & ELMORE

parker  
HUDSON

KILPATRICK  
TOWNSEND

Seyfarth

C|G|C  
COUNCIL  
GUNNEMANN  
& CHALLY

SYNOVUS

## PATRONS

lyft business

Chick-fil-&

amazon

troutman  
pepper

## GJP Senior Staff

Doug Ammar  
*Executive Director*

Brenda Smeeton  
*Legal Director*

Atoyia Johnson  
*Social Services Director*

Ermis Zayas  
*Development Director*

## Board of Directors

JaKathryn Ross  
*GJP Board Chair*  
Georgia-Pacific

R. Daniel Beale  
Dentons

Charlie Bingham, Jr.  
*Executive Committee Member*  
Splunk Technology

Anne Blitch  
The Coca-Cola Company

Robert Preston Brown  
*Immediate Past Board Chair*  
McKenney's, Inc.

Michael Canaras  
*Board Secretary*  
The Home Depot

Scott Casey  
UPS

Stephen D. Councill  
*Executive Committee Member*  
Councill, Gunneman & Chally

Derin B. Dickerson  
Alston & Bird

Von A. Dubose  
DuBose Miller

Tywanda Harris Lord  
Kilpatrick, Townsend & Stockton LLP

John H. Rains IV  
Bondurant, Mixson & Elmore LLP

Lawrence A. Slovensky  
*Vice Board Chair*  
King & Spalding

R. Gary Spencer  
NAACP Legal Defense &  
Education Fund

Asma Surani  
*Treasurer*  
Ernst & Young

Meg Taylor  
Delta Air Lines

Michele Young  
*Executive Committee Member*  
Attorney

## For More Information

Contact Wade Askew, Esq  
*GJP Policy Manager*  
404-827-0027 ext 214, Wade@GJP.org





**CHANGE IS BOTH VITAL FOR THE STATE'S LONG-TERM PROSPERITY AND  
THE RIGHT THING TO DO FOR REHABILITATED INDIVIDUALS.**

“If someone has made a mistake, not only should we NOT hold it against them for the rest of their lives, but we should also honor their rehabilitation and give them access to life’s essentials.”

Doug Ammar, GJP Executive Director



## OUR MISSION

**Georgia Justice Project** strengthens our community by demonstrating a better way to represent and support individuals in the criminal justice system and reduce barriers to reentry. GJP promotes innovative change through direct legal representation, policy advocacy, education, and coalition building.



**GEORGIA JUSTICE PROJECT**  
transforming our community for over 30 years

438 Edgewood Ave. SE • Atlanta, GA 30312 • (404) 827-0027 • [www.GJP.org](http://www.GJP.org)

[@gajustice](https://twitter.com/gajustice) [@georgiajusticeproject](https://facebook.com/georgiajusticeproject) [@gajusticeproject](https://instagram.com/gajusticeproject)

---

For more information, contact Wade Askew: [Wade@GJP.org](mailto:Wade@GJP.org), 404.827.0027 ext. 214  
or scan the QR code to learn more about GJP’s approach to policy change.

