

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Close the Workhouse Statement Addresses Falsehoods from STL Board of Alderman Meeting, Urges Permanent Closure of the Jail

After two and a half years of intense organizing and advocacy, today the work of the Close the Workhouse campaign reached a new height with the introduction of an amendment in the St. Louis [Board of Alderman](#) to remove funding from the Workhouse in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget and close the jail.

In the time since the 2017 Bailout, the campaign has gained momentum and the political will of St. Louis residents and elected officials to permanently shutter the inhumane Workhouse jail. Today, there are 92 people held in a facility at the cost of \$8M a year. Today, instead of voting on the budget amendment, the Board moved it to next week. Unfortunately, there were a number of flat-out falsehoods made during today's Board hearing.

Here are five key rebuttals to what we heard today:

1. Closing the Workhouse is the fiscally responsible thing to do, even more so now in the midst of a global pandemic.
2. Although we believe there are people who should be released, closing the Workhouse doesn't actually require releasing anyone at this point because those 92 people could be held at the City Justice Center (CJC). There are currently 215 open beds in the CJC, and we could create many more by reducing the 200 federal detainees in City custody.
3. For perspective, the Workhouse population has decreased by 85% in the past two years, and the overall jail population in St. Louis City is half of what it was in 2013.
4. This is a Black-led campaign that has prioritized the closure of the Workhouse as an effort to combat systemic racism. All of the noise about "outsiders" lecturing Black people is just empty theatrics.

5. Punting to a nonbinding question about closing the Workhouse on the ballot in November is just a dereliction of their duty as elected officials. Budgets are value statements. The time is now.

We wish to acknowledge and thank the following Alders for voicing new and continued support of closing the Workhouse during the three-hour debate: Alderwoman Sharon Tyus, Alderman Brandon Bosley, Alderwoman Megan Ellyia Green, Alderwoman Annie Rice, Alderman Bret Narayan, Alderman Dan Guenther, Alderman Jesse Todd, Alderwoman Sarah Martin, Alderwoman Christine Ingrassia, Alderwoman Cara Spencer, Alderwoman Heather Navarro, Alderwoman Shameem Clark-Hubbard, and Alderman Shane Cohen.

St. Louis City has the chance to be on the right side of history by closing the Workhouse and ensuring that another is not built in its place. The people who have been harmed by the Workhouse are also most at risk for contracting COVID-19, as we have seen again this week, and are the most likely to be targeted by state violence. We, as a community, have the opportunity to choose a better future now. Closing the Workhouse is not just a vision, it is the demand that this moment calls for.

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For more on the Close the Workhouse campaign, visit: www.closestheworkhouse.org, check out CtW on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube, and follow this conversation using #closestheworkhouse.