UC Berkeley's *Possibility Lab* and *For The People* Partner to Increase the Efficiency of Prosecutor-Initiated Resentencing Through Data Automation

University and Nonprofit Developing Automation Tool to Streamline Prosecutor Case Review to Allow for Safe Prison Releases

February 15, 2023 – BERKELEY, CA – The University of California, Berkeley's Possibility Lab is proud to announce its partnership with national nonprofit For The People, thanks to California 100, with added support from Microsoft and the Urban Institute.

Together, UC Berkeley's Possibility Lab and For The People are developing a case summary automation tool that will increase the efficiency of **Prosecutor-Initiated Resentencing** (PIR). PIR is an emerging area of law pioneered by For The People that enables prosecutors to revisit past cases and facilitate safe release from prison, when the sentence no longer serves the interest of justice. This new case summary automation tool will reduce time spent on manual, time-consuming elements of the PIR process.

For The People led the passage of the first PIR law in the country, which went into effect in 2019 to address excessive sentences. Today, five states have enacted their own PIR laws, and more than **600 people** have been resentenced. In addition to helping address excessive sentences, PIR can also be a powerful tool to help redress harmful racial disparities in prisons: in California alone, 80% of those incarcerated are people of color. The PIR process involves meticulous case review by prosecutors in collaboration with defense attorneys, community-based organizations, and most importantly, victims.

As PIR expands across the country, there is an opportunity to streamline the process by addressing one resource-intensive component: initial manual review of case records. During the PIR process, a prosecutor conducts a review of an incarcerated person's time in prison, which involves combing through voluminous papers to find key information. Currently, this part of the review can take up to eight hours per case — for only this initial step in the process.

In response, Possibility Lab and For The People are developing a technology solution that can systemically scrape files for the elements required for resentencing — from prison records and other documents — thus automating the earliest stage of the manual process. The automation is projected to reduce the time spent on this phase of case review from **eight hours** per case to **one hour**. If implemented, the automation would allow prosecutors to spend more time on case analysis, engaging with victims and/or victim services, reentry planning, and stakeholder coordination.

"We couldn't be more excited to partner with the Possibility Lab to continue two of the Bay Area's time-honored traditions: leading the charge on technological innovation and

advancing social equity," said For The People's Founder and Executive Director Hillary Blout. "This investment comes on the heels of the State of California's $18M investment in PIR and will only further support the continued scaling of PIR across the country. We are thrilled to support new resources that will in turn enable prosecutors to continue expanding this vision of justice."

"Increasingly, prosecutors believe that justice involves looking back. Now, data automation will help us do just that," said District Attorney Jeff Reisig of Yolo County, CA, one of the counties piloting this tool. "As one of the earliest adopters of PIR, I'm looking forward to this data-driven tool because it will help prosecutors like myself spend more time on the in-depth and measured consideration of a person's case, instead of the initial document filing that precedes it."

"The first step towards the transformation of our public safety system is the development of innovative ways to reduce disparities, remove barriers to equity, and repair the injustices of past government actions." stated Possibility Lab Director Dr. Amy Lerman.

Integrating data automation into case review is one example of how data-driven innovation can increase equity.

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About The Possibility Lab
The Possibility Lab at the University of California aims to mobilize community-engaged, data-driven innovation for the public good. All Possibility Lab research projects are co-designed with community and government partners in order to ensure that innovations are feasible in the short term, scalable in the future, and make meaningful progress towards systemic change. You can find more information about the Possibility Lab on their website or reach out to them directly at possibilitylab@berkeley.edu.

About For The People

Based in Oakland, CA, [For The People](#) is a national nonprofit that supports prosecutors to remedy excessive prison sentences. For The People works with prosecutors, victims, defense attorneys, system-impacted people, and community organizations with the goal of reuniting families and restoring communities. In 2018, the organization worked to pass the nation's [first-ever](#) **Prosecutor-Initiated Resentencing** law, enabling prosecutors to evaluate past sentences. Now, For The People supports prosecutors across the country to expand this vision of justice nationwide, providing policy and technical support. To learn more, visit [fortheppl.org](#), or follow For The People on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

About California 100
[California 100](#) is partnering with the Possibility Lab to support a stream of Innovation Projects at both the state and local level, focused on designing and rigorously testing big ideas that have the potential to advance California, but have not yet been attempted or accomplished at scale.