Twitter Thread by Jasmine M Heiss



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Okayyyy, I'll join everyone else in responding to today's news (instead of just sighing, gazing into middle distance). The profit incentive baked into private prisons is a mess. But you know what else is a HUGE MESS?

The revenue incentive in the federal jail market. ■

The federal government spends an estimated $1.3 billion to house people in a loose network of local jails. These agencies—primarily the US Marshals and ICE—are directly under federal control.

All of this federal $$ has incentivized counties to BUILD BIG when they're thinking about adding local jail space.

The wonderful Jack Norton @jcknorton calls this "an intercounty carceral arms race... to build and bigger and bigger jails." https://t.co/98s22r2fWL

As he point out in the piece, this was catalyze largely by "The Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984," which I like to "the lesser know crime Bill ™■." After passage, the no.
of people detained by the Marshals increased 32 percent in ONE YEAR.

The fact that so many people are now held for ICE in local jails—or at least that the contracts are in place to allow that—is a legacy of this bill. And you know who was was among the bill's biggest champions? That's right, one @POTUS Biden.

This system ties local revenue to the increased detention of asylum seekers, immigrants, and people detained on federal charges. That has political consequences: county budgets are tied to increased detention of Black, Brown and poor people.

(I just said "tied to" a lot, but you get the gist).

This is a terrible system all of the time. As @jcknorton found in Glades County, FL, it can create this whole new WEIRD system of private profits, going to investors who back big new jails.

https://t.co/EsTK4wd7EX

As COVID-19 spread, continued transfers through this detention empire have been CATASTROPHIC. As @keribla writes, reports began to pop up earlier this year about the Marshals transferring people with active COVID-19 infections https://t.co/DuSz7HtEHp

According to reporting by @keegan_hamilton @ Vice, the BOP knew about “super spreader” jails holding for USMS. Yet absolutely nothing has been done to stop transfers.

https://t.co/35ggeNKe0E

This is a big, consequential facet of the justice system that the current administration has direct control over. If they’re serious about addressing spread of COVID-19 on both sides of the bars, addressing perverse $$ incentives, and advancing racial equity, look @ ICE and USMS

They have GOT to start taking these contracts offline. And if they’re trying to figure out where to start, one obvious place would be the MANY jails where people held for the feds have died of abuse and neglect, even PRIOR to COVID-19. Via @SethFW
https://t.co/qljBoNGHaa

The other obvious place are the many counties—and now states—where communities are already pushing their local governments to eliminate Federal contracts. Imagine how else A BILLION dollars could be invested in communities.
https://t.co/fc0Gv6plwr