



HEALTH AS PRACTICE + PROTECTION

PRESENTED TO THE SANGAMON COUNTY BOARD
AND THE PEOPLE OF SANGAMON COUNTY

DECEMBER 2025



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PREFACE: A YEAR-ONE LEGACY REPORT

This Year-One Legacy Report represents both an ending and a beginning. Born from grief, guided by community, and grounded in the pursuit of justice, the Massey Commission's work has illuminated how Sangamon County can transform tragedy into accountability, and outrage into repair. What follows is a roadmap for collective action—anchored in truth, driven by courage, and dedicated to the protection of health as our shared human right.

Naming This Moment

We would be remiss in not naming the moment in which we're living, struggling, and dying in this nation.

We are doing this work in a time of profound tension – between what this nation promises and what it permits. Federal agencies once charged with safeguarding rights are now engaged in acts that strip them away: detaining citizens and migrants alike, seizing public funds that could sustain healthcare and housing, and undermining trust in the very systems meant to serve. ICE raids, policy rollbacks, and calculated neglect have become systems of a deeper moral fracture. One where cruelty is mistaken for order.

This tension is not new. It is woven through our nation's history and through this county's own story. In 1908, right here in Springfield (replete with Abraham Lincoln lore) a white mob destroyed the homes and businesses of Black residents, lynched two men, and terrorized an entire community. That horror drew national outrage and it became a catalyst for the formation of the NAACP, a movement born from Springfield's failure to live up to Lincoln's promise of justice. This is the tension that has always lived here: the distance between the ideals carved in marble and the realities lived in flesh.

We have seen it play out across the country. In the surveillance of Civil Rights leaders under COINTELPRO, in the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, and in the sweeping detentions and surveillance following 9/11. Each era carried the same warning: that fear, when left unchallenged, corrodes democracy from the inside out. The machinery of control expands while the public's sense of shared safety collapses.

Today, that same machinery is at work. Louder, less accountable, and more brazen in its disregard for human dignity. Yet here, in Sangamon County, we are choosing to respond differently. The Massey Commission stands within this national moment of strain and refuses to replicate its harm. What we ask of our local institutions is not radical. It is restorative. It is what responsible governance looks like when trust has been broken: to reckon with injustice, to repair what was damaged, and to root public safety in care rather than coercion.

The Commission's charge exists within this larger historical arc, and our work insists that this community will not repeat the worst patterns of its past. We hold that tension not as paralysis, but as possibility.

To ask the people of Sangamon County to wait for reform or to negotiate incremental change is to misunderstand the nature of the harm. *You cannot reason with a tiger when your head is in its mouth.* For too long, systems grounded in white supremacy have demanded that those most impacted by inequity appeal to the very structures that have constrained their lives. The imbalance of power is not theoretical. It is lived, enforced, and justified through policy, practice, and silence. The people of Sangamon County are not asking permission to be free from harm; we are declaring that the harm must end. Reason cannot exist where domination persists. Justice requires not conversation with the tiger, but its removal — the dismantling of the systems that feed it.



It is from this understanding – of the moment, of the stakes, and of the history we are determined not to repeat – that the Massey Commission has carried out its first year of work. With the support of the Sangamon County Board, which extended our timeline and resources to ensure this legacy work could be completed with integrity, we offer this Year One Report as both record and roadmap. What follows is a letter from the Commission’s co-chairs, Dr. Jerry Kruse and JoAnn Johnson, grounding our work in gratitude, grief, and the shared resolve to build something better.

Mission: To take action and make recommendations that expand safe and equitable access to services by addressing systemic racism and mistrust in law enforcement and other helping professions.

The Massey Commission is guided by the following values:

Community - The Commission is committed to hearing all voices, through active listening, through active pursuit of often-unheard voices through engagement with the community.

Transparency - The Commission is committed to transparent processes, activities and reporting that is open to the public for scrutiny and comment.

Equity - The Commission is committed to uncovering inequities in its analyses of policies, programs by evaluating structural racism and other biases.

Accountability - The Commission is committed to modeling structural accountability as it demands the same from other public bodies responsible for serving the community.

LETTER FROM COMMISSION LEADERSHIP

Dear partners and community members,

As the seasons shift and we mark the close of another year, we find ourselves reflecting—soberly and with hope—on the work that brought us together and the long journey still ahead. This past year has been a time of listening, reckoning, and beginning to repair. We are honored to share with you the Report of the Massey Commission.

The Massey Commission was formed in the wake of profound loss. In July 2024, Sonya Massey—a 36-year-old Black woman, mother, and cherished community member—was tragically murdered by a Sangamon County Sheriff's Deputy during what should have been a call for help. Her death sent shockwaves across Springfield and Sangamon County, sparking grief, outrage, and a deep, long-overdue reckoning with the systems and structures that enabled such a tragedy. Her death was preceded by the death of Earl Moore, Jr., and the severe injuries of Gregory Small, Jr., both of whom met harm at the hands of the helping professions. As the Massey Commission work began, investigators also uncovered at least eight other deaths and more than 50 civil rights complaints in which the action, or inaction, of Sangamon County officials was called into question.

In response to community outcry and collective demands for justice, accountability, and change, the Massey Commission was established. Our mandate is to investigate systemic inequities across our institutions—particularly those impacting Black and marginalized residents—and to elevate the truths, histories, and voices that have too often been silenced. Our mission is rooted in truth-telling, accountability, and a commitment to transformation.

Our goal was to lay the foundation for that work by gathering stories, data, and histories—many long ignored or unheard—and to begin mapping a path forward. We did not enter this process with easy answers. Instead, we committed ourselves to listening deeply, speaking honestly, and learning continuously.

We encountered truths that were often hard to hold: legacies of racial exclusion in housing and education; disparities in health outcomes and policing; community members navigating daily barriers to dignity and opportunity. We also witnessed resilience, wisdom, and a persistent refusal to give up on what Springfield could be.

But we did observe a waning interest, a general malaise, and a visible lack of involvement of the leading civic, social, and business leaders of Sangamon County in the work of the Massey Commission. The same malaise was noted at the time of the murder of George Floyd. In his book, *The Essential Kerner Commission Report*, author Jelani Cobb wrote:

“In the wake of (George) Floyd’s death, Police Officers Federation president Bob Kroll noted that the incident ‘does look and sound horrible’...and was potentially aggravated by local police leadership. Kroll’s comment suggested that rogue police felt emboldened by a president seeming sympathetic to their way of operating. Yet, here is where the fifty-two-year-old insights of Kerner remain most applicable. ‘Police are not merely the spark,’ the Kerner report tells us. They are part of the broader set of institutional relationships that enforce and re-create racial inequality. The problem is never simply the incident, but the facts and factors that made such an incident possible, even predictable.”

Cobb continued that Minneapolis was ranked as one of the best places to live in the US News & World Report even though it was also “among the cities with the worst socioeconomic disparities between Black residents and white residents.” A former Minneapolis mayor, Betty Hodges, pointed to racial hypocrisy as a cause of the crisis. She noted that the white community, despite believing that they are saying and doing the right things, has resisted the systematic changes our cities have needed for decades, settling for illusions of change, like testing pilot programs and funding volunteer opportunities. She continued, “these efforts fundamentally change little for the communities of color whose disadvantages often come from the hoarding of advantage by mostly white neighborhoods.”

The people of Springfield, and in particular the corporate leadership of the area must understand that the same conditions exist in Sangamon County as did in Minneapolis, and that measures to change the culture to dismantle systemic racism are vital for this county. The community must actively and fully implement the Massey Commission calls to action.

We, as co-chairs, acknowledge that the work of this Commission is taking place amid ongoing disagreements, fatigue, and justified skepticism. Not all voices have been included. Not every story made it into this report. There is more to uncover, more to question, and more to learn. We name these limitations not as excuses, but as reminders of our responsibility to do better—together.

We are deeply grateful to the many individuals who made this work possible. To the staff who labored with care and diligence, to the residents who shared their lived experiences, to the community organizers and cultural workers who offered guidance, and to the local experts who lent their time and knowledge—we thank you. Your contributions shaped every page of this report.

As we deliver this final report and formally conclude the work of the Massey Commission in its current form, we do so with a clear charge to our community: this work cannot and must not end here. The findings and calls to action within these pages are not simply recommendations—they are an obligatory roadmap for change.

We call on civic leaders, the Sangamon County Board, the Springfield City Council, the Mayor, law enforcement personnel, first responders, the business community, the corporate leaders, the medical and social service agencies, the academic community, the activists, the grassroots organizers, the institutions, and every citizen of Springfield and Sangamon County to carry this work forward with urgency, courage, and accountability. The responsibility now belongs to all of us.

Though the Commission’s tenure is ending, the struggle for justice and equity continues—and we remain committed, in solidarity and humility, to supporting that journey however we can. Let this not be a closing chapter, but a turning point. Change is not only possible—it is necessary, and it is already underway.

With respect and resolve:

JoAnn Johnson
Co-chair, Massey Commission

Jerry Kruse
Co-chair, Massey Commission



Update on Do Commissions Work?

For decades, commissions like the Kerner Commission (1968) and the Ferguson Commission (2015) have exposed the deep injustices in policing and public safety. They revealed the structural racism, economic inequities, and institutional failures that fracture trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. History reminds us that commissions only matter if they compel action. The Kerner Commission diagnosed racial injustice with clarity and courage, but its recommendations were largely ignored. The Ferguson Commission demanded bold reform, and while some progress followed—body cameras, municipal court changes—the deeper work of justice remained unfinished.

The Massey Commission was created in that lineage—but with a different charge. We were not convened to admire the problem or to repeat the cycle of recommendations that gather dust. We were asked to name the harm, to confront the systems that perpetuate it, and to demand the structural repair that true public safety requires. Like President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2014), which succeeded because its work carried an implementation mandate, our Calls to Action are designed for adoption, not contemplation.

This report is therefore not a conclusion. It is a commitment—to ensure that Sangamon County leadership turns recommendations into reality, grief into accountability, and promises into policy.

Naming the Grief + Reclaiming Our Power

Throughout the community feedback sessions, a question resurfaced repeatedly: “What if they don’t?” In this instance, they refers to those in positions of governance, power, and decision-making. The “they” shifts depending on who speaks and referred to local government, law enforcement, policymakers, or other systems of power. But what remains constant is the ache beneath the question. It is not only about distrust in institutions; it is about the grief of being unheard, unseen, and unprotected for too long.

That grief has wisdom in it. It tells us what has been lost and what must never be lost again. It reminds us that communities do not become skeptical out of apathy, but out of experience. They have watched reports fade into silence, gathering dust on a shelf. They have seen promises of reform fall short of transformation. They know that listening sessions without action are another form of harm. It is not cynicism for its own sake. It is grief, expressed through vigilance.

This question, simple on the surface, carries the weight of generations. It reveals both heartbreak and history. The lived experience of people who have been told that change was coming, only to watch systems remain intact. It is not cynicism for its own sake. It is grief, expressed through vigilance.

In each of those Community Feedback sessions, that question is incomplete, and sometimes an addition to the question was a reflection of community responsibility: What will we do if they don’t? Often, what followed were questions and concerns of who wasn’t in the room. Decision makers and enforcers, those who hold policy tightly in hand, and those in leadership with the power to enact inaction.

We learned important lessons in that space. Many community members who showed up to these sessions did so not because they believed that power would listen, but because they needed to be heard in their pain. It’s important to name this, too: other wounded people held that pain for them.

At our final Community Feedback session on October 24, a community member commented to the participants “*something brought you here today*” while the discussion about who was new in the room rose up. Excellent conversations came through those Feedback sessions, with community members expressing a pain that can only be described as generational grief. The people saw themselves harmed in those same systems and named it for the room. They similarly felt disrespected, vulnerable, and helpless in the front of systems that have historically failed to protect or honor them.

Naming this grief is essential. It reminds us that distrust is not the opposite of hope - it is a form of wisdom earned through experience. Communities develop skepticism as a survival skill, a way of bracing against disappointment. That meeting happened to coincide with day 3 of the trial, elevating pain and fear of being let down again by those systems. In doing so, this allowed us to notice that in cultivating clarity we get to the root of what true accountability must look like.

As a Commission, we honor that grief as truth-telling. It must not be diminished as resistance to progress, but understood as testimony. Evidence of harm that continues and evidence of a deep longing for transformation.

And yet, within that same grief, we have also witnessed another truth: people keep showing up. They come back to the table, even when they expect to be let down, because some part of them still believes that together, we can create something different. That this tragedy, simply being one of the loudest and most painful some of these community members have in their recent memory, will be The One that will act as a catalyst for change. That persistence of our community refuses to give up and is its own form of power.

Our work, then, is to meet the question “*What if they don’t?*” with both honesty and imagination. We acknowledge the real possibility that institutions may resist change. And, importantly, we also recognize that change does not begin or end with them. Transformation grows from community. It grows from collective memory, from continued organizing, and from networks of care that make it harder and harder for systems to ignore what is right.

To name the grief is to dignify it. To keep working anyway is to transform it into power.

Audacity in Action: Building Accountability Beyond Promises

Audacity is not recklessness – it is moral clarity in motion. It is what happens when grief refuses to be quiet, and when love for community, made real in every room where Commission work was going on and where space for grief was heavy, turns into an insistence on transformation. The Massey Commission’s findings and recommendations are not symbolic gestures; they are blueprints for change. To honor the truth we heard, implementation must be public, measurable, and participatory.

This means moving beyond reports that gather dust. It means structural accountability with systems that track progress, invite scrutiny, and require response. Strong themes emerged from this year of work, daring us to be audacious.

Transparency is not punishment. It is a declaration that accountability belongs to the people.

Community oversight is not an afterthought. It is a safeguard against erasure.

Forums are necessary as checkpoints of integrity, affirming that healing requires repetition and presence, not just policy

Policy without healing is insufficient.

Audacity, in this context, means we will not wait for permission to believe this community deserves better. It means we expect those with power to meet us at the level of our courage, not our despair.

Our grief demands that something *real* changes.
Our love demands that we keep watch until it does.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the voices of experts, the rigor of research, the depth of scholarship, and the weight of lived experience within our own community, the Massey Commission uncovered insights that illuminate the realities at the heart of its work.

The Massey Commission issues a direct challenge: let this report be a turning point, not a moment of reflection that fades. Sangamon County and Springfield must take accountable, measurable steps to implement these recommended Calls to Action, monitor progress rigorously, and prioritize equity over convenience. The legacy of this work will be defined not by the report itself, but by the lasting transformation it inspires: justice that is real, accessible, and enduring.

Through rigorous analysis, review of evidence, expert testimony, and the lived experiences of residents, the Commission identified critical areas requiring immediate and sustained attention:

- **Law Enforcement Reform:** Structural changes are needed in hiring practices, training, and accountability mechanisms at the Sangamon County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies within the City of Springfield. Antiracism and anti-bias training must be mandatory, and independent oversight must be empowered to investigate misconduct effectively.
- **Mental Health and Crisis Response:** The current systems fail too many residents in moments of urgent need. A county-wide mental health board and integrated crisis response protocols are essential to protect lives and ensure equity in access to care.
- **Independent Oversight and Civic Accountability:** Residents deserve transparent mechanisms to hold public officials accountable, including meaningful oversight of law enforcement and clear processes for community input and influence in governance.
- **Community-Centered Engagement:** Reform cannot occur from the top down. The Commission has demonstrated the power of meaningful engagement through public hearings, listening sessions, and dialogues that center lived experience as evidence. The continuation of these practices is critical to sustaining change.

The Massey Commission stands at the intersection of grief, urgency, and opportunity. It has illuminated what must be done and what can be achieved when a community refuses to accept inequity as the status quo. The path forward is clear, and the responsibility is shared. The work of justice is demanding, but it is also necessary. This is the moment for Sangamon County and the City of Springfield to act decisively, courageously, and without delay.

Listen. Learn. Act.

The Massey Commission began in the wake of an unimaginable loss: the killing of Ms. Sonya Massey, a woman and mother who called for help and received harm. Her death demanded that this community do more than express sorrow. It demanded that we change.

From the start, we committed to a simple but sacred rhythm: **Listen. Learn. Act.**



We listened - to the cries of a grieving family, to the anger and exhaustion of residents who no longer felt safe, and to the public servants reckoning with their own roles in broken systems. Listening built trust where there had been fear and silence. It required humility. It asked us to slow down, to make space for pain, and to hear the truths that polite conversations often avoid.

We learned - from history and from one another. We studied patterns of harm, inequity, and neglect that stretched far beyond one moment or one person. We examined how race, disability, poverty, and policy intersect to shape outcomes that are anything but accidental. Learning built understanding; not just of what happened, but of why it keeps happening.

We acted - because listening and learning mean little without change. The Commission's Calls to Action are not symbolic. They are blueprints for transformation and the reforms that can rebuild systems, create trust, and repair harm. Action builds the change that Sangamon County residents demand. It is how we turn grief into governance and mourning into momentum.

To **Listen. Learn. Act.** is both the process and the promise of this report. It is how we began our work and how Sangamon County must carry it forward.

A photograph of two women seated at a long table covered with a white cloth. The woman on the right, with long dark hair, is speaking into a black microphone. The woman on the left, with long blonde hair, is looking towards her. On the table are several water bottles, papers, and nameplates. One nameplate clearly reads 'Veronica Espina'. Another one partially visible on the right reads 'Kristin'. The background is a blurred indoor setting. The entire image has a purple color overlay.

PART I:

BACKGROUND + CONTEXT

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Introduction & Charge

The Massey Commission was established on August 16, 2024, by Sangamon County Board Chairman Andy Van Meter and State Senator Doris Turner in response to the tragic death of Sonya Massey at the hands of a former Sangamon County deputy on July 7, 2024. This Commission was created not only to address the immediate tragedy but also to respond to the long-standing concerns of residents about the safety and well-being of the Black community in Springfield, Illinois. It represents a commitment by our community and its leaders to listen, learn, and act together toward meaningful change.

Supported by the Sangamon County Board, the Commission was tasked with a profound responsibility: to examine the systems that shape our community, elevate the voices of those most affected, and develop actionable solutions that restore trust and safeguard human dignity. This report reflects the culmination of that charge, capturing the Commission's work, findings, and recommendations as an official record for both the County Board and the community it serves.

From the outset, the Commission embraced a clear mission: to advance justice, strengthen community well-being, and build systems rooted in equity, transparency, and accountability. Every stage of its work centered the experiences of impacted residents. Recommendations were designed not merely to identify problems, but to chart sustainable, community-informed paths forward.

The Commission's composition was intentional, bringing together community leaders, subject matter experts, system representatives, and individuals with lived experience. Leadership was provided by co-chairs, with the guidance of a managing director and support staff, while specialized workgroups delved into focused issue areas to develop detailed, actionable recommendations.

The Commission's work unfolded in phases. Early efforts focused on establishing structure and priorities—defining bylaws, decision-making procedures, and workgroup goals. Research and discovery followed, including data analysis, document review, and consultation with experts and partner agencies. Central to every step was community engagement: listening sessions, public comment opportunities, and dialogue that directly shaped the Commission's decisions.

As findings emerged, workgroups drafted proposals, refining them through deliberation and consensus. Meetings were held openly, documentation was shared publicly, and transparency remained a guiding principle. All work was anchored in equity, evidence-based decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving between the community and the systems that serve it.

This report transitions from process to action. It presents the Commission's final recommendations as a foundation for long-term transformation. These proposals are both aspirational and achievable, rooted in lived experience, and designed to guide our community toward systems that honor human dignity, restore trust, and expand opportunities for all. The work ahead requires continued partnership, commitment, and accountability—and it begins here.

Context

The murder of Sonya Massey did not occur in isolation; it revealed patterns many residents endure daily – and that others have never had to confront.

This report names those patterns plainly and charts a way forward. The terms below are our compass, grounding every step of this work.

“Sangamon County- The Massey Report”

If our county is to move forward, we must move through the facts, not around them. That means sitting with discomfort, telling the truth about race and safety, and refusing to let difficult conversations be pushed back into silence. Avoidance is easy. It doesn’t work.

Directives for Action

- Keep race and safety at the center of every public update.
- Create safe spaces for truth-telling – forums, neighborhood dialogues, and listening sessions that begin with hearing, not defending.

“A PATH”

We cannot script what lies ahead. But we can begin with what we know: lived experience, evidence, and community wisdom. This is not a promise of perfection. It is a commitment to concrete, ongoing action – to test, to learn, and to stay accountable as we go.

Directives for Action

- Treat recommendations as a living roadmap, updated as learning occurs.
- Pair each recommendation with actions, responsible leads, and rationale.
- Pilot, measure, and scale: expand what works and retire what does not.

“TOWARDS HEALING”

Healing is not the opposite of accountability; it is a condition for it. It’s what makes accountability possible.

Trauma lives in people and in places. Safety grows where grief is acknowledged, dignity is protected, and help shows up when needed. What the Massey family required upon sharing their grief with the community was care and concern, but some law enforcement leaders met grieving crowds instead with bullet-proof vests and fear. When Black communities have historically been harmed, they aren’t met with comfort, but with faces of fear from those who hold privilege and that fear is pain that might expose their complicity.

Directives for Action

- Expand mental health support for our community and first responders, funding both clinical and community-based systems.
- Normalize care and remove stigmas while providing for mobile support without gatekeeping.
- Center families – including Sonya Massey’s– in memorial, restorative, and policy responses.

“JUSTICE”

Justice isn't a headline or fancy buzzword; it's a sequence: facts, findings, consequences, repair. It applies to individuals and institutions alike. When something goes wrong, the public should not need a map and a flashlight to find out what happened.

Directives for Action

- Establish independent oversight with investigative power, public timelines, and transparent, trackable cases.
- Tie justice to accountability: apologies, restitution, and corrective policy.

“SAFETY”

This work is about safety, and yes, it is about race. Both can be true.

We are not attempting to label people, but to examine systems charged with our protection and safety. When outcomes are predictably unequal across neighborhoods and racial groups, we are obligated to change those systems.

Directives for Action

- Disaggregate every metric (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and geography) and publish it in a timely manner for the public.
- Apply a racial and equity screen on budgets, policies, and contracts:
Who is in the room and who isn't, who benefits, who is burdened? Tie progress to outcomes residents can see and feel. This means fewer preventable deaths, faster and safer crisis responses, more accessible mental health resources, and higher trust in law enforcement.

“WE”

When this report says “we,” it means everyone – elected officials, union and labor partners, educators and healthcare providers, farmers and business leaders, philanthropists, faith and neighborhood organizations, residents, and law enforcement at all levels.

Responsibility is shared, not diffused. This is for all accountable parties in Sangamon County.

Directives for Action

- Host a yearly summit where partners report on progress, ensuring continuous engagement and transparency.
- Require every partner to name a point person, publish a work plan, and report measurable progress through a centralized dashboard.

Context: The Massey Report – A Path Toward Healing, Justice and Safety

What This Report Is (and Isn't)

This report is not symbolic. It is not a decoration.

It is a **mandate for measurable, systemic change**. A public contract between institutions and the people they serve.

It makes three commitments:

- **Clarity:** Plain-language recommendations, each with clear actions, owners, and rationale.
- **Transparency:** All data and reports informing our findings are open to the public.
- **Accountability:** We name both what is within our scope and what requires urgent attention beyond it.

North Star Measures

We will know we are moving in the right direction when we can see measurable progress:

- Fewer preventable deaths and serious harms during crises involving first responders.
- Faster, safer responses to mental health calls.
- Reduced racial disparities in stops, arrests, charging, school resources, and access to services.
- Higher public trust and legitimacy, measured by regular community forums and surveys.
- Increased investment in prevention and community health, with clear, documented public returns.
- Our path is not the easy one – but it is the necessary one.
- We have chosen to walk it together, with urgency, humility, and a stubborn commitment to bringing about the systemic change our community needs and deserves.
- The work begins here, and it will not end until safety and dignity are ordinary for everyone in Sangamon County.

Process & Structure

The Final Six Months (April-September 2025)

Listening to the Experts, Learning from Each Other: Insights and Guidance from the Massey Commission's Guest Speakers

The latter half of 2025 was a time of both momentum and maturation for the Massey Commission. Each meeting deepened our understanding of what it means to build a just and healthy community where safety, belonging, education, and repair are greatly valued.

Over the course of its second half-year, the Massey Commission was fortunate to be guided by an extraordinary group of educators, policy leaders, public health experts, law enforcement officials, advocates, and community organizers. Their contributions did more than inform the Commission's findings. They reminded us of the depth of local wisdom, professional expertise, and moral clarity already present within our region. Each speaker challenged us to see the work of justice and healing not as a single task, but as an ongoing practice grounded in truth, accountability, and care while this time reflected the building momentum and maturation for the Massey Commission.

The Commission expresses deep gratitude to all who shared their time and expertise with us between April and September 2025. From higher education leaders to frontline public health practitioners, from state legislators to national reform partners, each speaker added substance and perspective to our growing body of Calls to Action.

April 2025

In April, Dr. Daniel Mahoney, Dr. Wendi El-Amin, and Dr. Shreepada Tripathy of Southern Illinois University reminded the Commission that inequity is structural and measurable. This trio of educators framed the Commission's work within a larger ecosystem of equity. This was seen in data about educational attainment, health disparities, and neighborhood segregation. Their presentations underscored how systems shape outcomes, and how data, when made public, can be a tool of justice.

May 2025

As spring turned to summer, Commissioner Veronica Espina and State Senator Doris Turner invited us to think about accountability not only as an ethical commitment, but also as legislative action. Commissioner Espina spoke with both heart and urgency about immigrant families' right to safety and belonging. Senator Turner brought clarity to the legislative path forward, connecting our local efforts to statewide reform through her transparency and recall bills. SB1953, a bill she was introducing that became law on August 12, 2025, is known as the Sonya Massey Bill. Senator Turner's explanation of Senate Bills 1953 and 1954, both designed to improve transparency and recall authority in law enforcement, showed how courageous lawmaking can extend the Commission's mission into the halls of government.

Leadership from Yale's Justice Collaboratory, Jorge Camacho, demonstrated how local advocacy and state policy can converge to create lasting change. Each workgroup provided the Justice Collaboratory with sets of questions they had which were then researched and returned to the workgroups as guiding documents for discussion. Those often prompted more questions and deeper learning that the workgroups used as one of their tools in creating their final reports. Mr. Camacho guided us toward policy rooted in data, partnership, and ongoing evaluation. Their collective message: justice is not theoretical. It must be codified, tracked, and made public.

June 2025

By June, the Commission turned its attention locally as they listened to Sheriff Paula Crouch discuss evolving practices within the Sangamon County Sheriff's Office. Commissioners appreciated the sheriff's willingness to share progress and data while also acknowledging that community trust requires sustained transparency and independent oversight. The conversations illuminated the tension between institutional reform and public accountability, both of which remain central to the Calls to Action. This conversation set the stage for continued accountability.

July 2025

In July, two very different presentations highlighted the complexity of community healing. The Mosaic Partnerships Program shared its model for interracial dialogue and interpersonal trust-building. While the Commission appreciated the intention behind this effort, members recognized that true healing requires more than conversation. Here, the Commissioners were firm in their understanding of the systemic changes required while also acknowledging that the model may not meet this community's needs in its current form.



Later, Amy Endicott and Chad Reese of the Institute for Justice offered a compelling look at victims' rights and the urgent need for qualified immunity reform. Their testimony reinforced that justice must center the dignity of those harmed and ensure pathways for accountability within law enforcement. The presentation on victims' rights and qualified immunity was concrete, policy-driven, and directly tied to systemic accountability.

August 2025

The August meeting, among the most memorable of the Commission's tenure, welcomed Forward Through Ferguson leaders Rev. Bethany Johnson-Javois, Nicole Hudson, and David Dwight IV whose wisdom and candor deeply moved the Commission. They shared hard-won lessons from the Ferguson Commission's transformation into a living organization for change. Their message was clear: build ecosystems, not silos; measure impact through story and data; act with courage, audacity, and humility; and never forget the families whose loss gave rise to the work. Their guidance affirmed that the Massey Commission's future will depend not only on the strength of its Calls to Action, but on its capacity to sustain collective care, collaboration, and radical transparency.

September 2025

In September, rather than formal presentations, the Commission held a Community Feedback Session. This was an opportunity for listening, learning, and refining. Residents, partners, and workgroup members reviewed the emerging Calls to Action and shared their hopes for how these recommendations would move from report to reality.

Across these six months, the Massey Commission transformed from a fact-finding body into a catalyst for lasting change. The guest speakers' contributions helped refine the Calls to Action into a coherent framework that reflects both the science of policy and the soul of community. The Commission moved forward guided by the same principles that began this journey, both prioritizing and humanizing them into: Truth + Accountability, Safety + Dignity, Repair + Investment, Access + Belonging, and Education + Liberation.



PART II:

FINDINGS + SIGNATURE PRIORITIES



PART II: FINDINGS + SIGNATURE PRIORITIES

About the Signature Priorities

Each Signature Priority represents both a value and an imperative. The “+” symbol is intentional. It reflects the belief that naming what we value is not enough; we must link every value to an act of repair, creation, or accountability. Trust must be **joined** with accountability. Education must **lead** to liberation. Access must result in belonging. Repair must come with sustained investment. Safety must honor dignity.

In choosing this format, the Commission emphasizes that justice requires both conviction and motion. Each priority names what this community holds sacred and what must be done to make it real. The “+” serves as a connective promise – a reminder that values alone will not heal harm, and actions without values lose their moral center.

Together, these five priorities form the backbone of the Calls to Action that follow. They are not theoretical. They are the product of months of listening, learning, and the actions required to confront the systems that too often protect comfort instead of people. Every recommendation in this section is grounded in research, community experience, and the collective insistence that Sangamon County and the City of Springfield can be different if we choose to act differently.

We also learned that there is an overarching Signature Priority over each of the 5: Health as practice and protection. Health is not a single outcome, it is the measure of justice itself.

When our systems **protect** health (physical, mental, civic, and spiritual) they honor the dignity of every person. When we **practice** health through policy, investment, education, and accountability then we repair harm and create belonging.

Health is the thread through them all. Health is evidence that justice lives in us, not only in our policies. It is what safety feels like, what truth restores, what access provides, what repair funds, and what education liberates.

To protect health is to practice justice.

To practice justice is to make our community whole.

From its first meeting, the Massey Commission was guided by three promises: to listen, to learn, and to act. Part I of this report traced how we were formed, how we engaged with the community, and how we examined the systems that shape daily life in Sangamon County. What follows now is the heart of our work – the Calls to Action that emerged from months of testimony, research, and reflection.

Through that process, the Commission and its staff refined more than one hundred early recommendations into 26 Calls to Action organized under five Signature Priorities: **Truth + Accountability, Education + Liberation, Access + Belonging, Repair + Investment, and Safety + Dignity**. Together, they form a living framework for change. Each priority captures both a moral value and a public responsibility. Each call names a concrete step toward the county we deserve.

These priorities are not abstract themes. They are directions. They tell us where to begin, how to measure progress, and who must act. They are rooted in evidence, informed by the Justice Collaboratory’s research, and shaped by the voices of the people most affected by inequity. Part II presents these five priorities, followed by the 26 Calls to action that give them form and urgency.

SIGNATURE PRIORITY #1: SAFETY + DIGNITY

We are safe when we are seen.

Issue Statement

A healthy community values safety and offers dignity to all. Safety is not the absence of conflict—it is the presence of dignity. Every resident deserves protection that affirms their humanity. Systems that rely on force, fear, or neglect reproduce harm and deepen mistrust. True safety begins long before a crisis; it is built through belonging, care, and prevention. When people are treated with respect, listened to without judgment, and responded to without violence, communities heal. Safety + Dignity calls for policies that protect without punishing, ensuring that care is the default, not the exception.

Why It Matters

Research from the Yale Justice Collaboratory and national policing reform studies confirm that procedural justice—fairness, transparency, and respect—directly increases public trust and cooperation.

Evidence shows that:

- Trauma-informed first response models lower the likelihood of escalation and injury for both residents and responders.
- Co-responder and non-police crisis teams improve outcomes for mental-health-related calls by up to 80%.
- Communities that pair accountability with compassion see measurable decreases in recidivism and increases in community trust.

Core Calls to Action / Key Partners

- Develop trauma-informed crisis response networks.
- Require transparent misconduct reporting and public dashboards.
- Expand community-based safety centers and prevention programs.

Key Partners: Law Enforcement + First Responder Agencies, Public Health Departments, Behavioral Health Providers, Community Advocates.

COMMUNITY VOICE
PUBLIC COMMENT
JANUARY 2025

“We just want to be treated like our lives matter when we call for help. If someone is in crisis, they shouldn’t have to fear for their life when the police arrive.”

— KEN PACHA

SIGNATURE PRIORITY #2: TRUTH + ACCOUNTABILITY

Face it. Fix it. Never forget.

Issue Statement

A healthy community tells the truth about harm and demands accountability from its institutions. Accountability is love in public form. Telling the truth about harm is how communities begin to heal. Denial protects systems, not people. Truth + Accountability demands transparency from every institution that serves the public—law enforcement, government, education, and healthcare alike. Facing the truth is not about blame; it is about courage. To acknowledge wrongdoing, disclose data, and center those impacted is to practice integrity. Without accountability, apologies are performative.

Why It Matters

The Ferguson and Kerner Commissions taught that failing to confront truth guarantees repetition of harm.

Evidence shows that:

- Independent oversight and public reporting reduce repeat misconduct and increase community confidence.
- Transparent data sharing accelerates policy learning and prevents institutional amnesia.
- Public acknowledgment of harm, followed by concrete restitution, increases legitimacy and restores trust.

Core Calls to Action / Key Partners

- Establish independent civilian oversight and data transparency systems.
- Require racial-equity impact statements for all major policy and budget decisions.
- Create an annual 'People's Scorecard Summit' to measure progress publicly.

Key Partners: County Board, City Council, State's Attorney Office, Local Media, Civic Data Institutions, Community Researchers.

COMMUNITY VOICE

PUBLIC COMMENT

FEBRUARY 2025

**“Don’t tell us
to trust you—
show us why
we should.
We’ve been
told to wait, to
have faith, to be
patient. We’re
done waiting for
accountability.”**

— THOMAS DAVIS

SIGNATURE PRIORITY #3: ACCESS + BELONGING

If it's not for all of us, it's not justice.

Issue Statement

A healthy community ensures that everyone can access what they need and feel that they belong once they arrive. Access without belonging is survival without safety. Communities thrive when every resident—across race, disability, gender, age, and income—can reach what they need and feel they belong once they arrive. Barriers to transportation, housing, healthcare, and civic participation are symptoms of exclusion, not accidents of design. Access + Belonging means redesigning systems so that equity is built in. It asks every institution: Who feels welcome here? Who doesn't—and why?

Why It Matters

Public-health and equity data show that social inclusion is a determinant of well-being. When residents see themselves reflected in leadership and process, participation rises and disparities narrow.

Evidence shows that:

- Universal design and multilingual outreach increase service utilization and trust.
- Equitable transit and broadband access expand employment and education opportunities.
- Inclusive representation in decision-making improves health and civic outcomes.

Core Calls to Action / Key Partners

- Conduct accessibility and inclusion audits across public services.
- Fund community navigators to assist residents in accessing supports.
- Partner with local schools, libraries, and cultural institutions to host belonging-building events.

Key Partners: Disability Advocates, Community Health Centers, Immigrant Resource Groups, City Planning and Transit Authorities, Educational Institutions.

COMMUNITY VOICE
PUBLIC COMMENT
MARCH 2025

“People can’t belong in spaces that were never built for them. If the same people keep getting invited to the table, then it’s not the people’s table.”

— ZACH LONG

SIGNATURE PRIORITY #4: REPAIR + INVESTMENT

Justice is a budget line.

Issue Statement

A healthy community invests in healing what has been harmed. Redirecting resources to heal and sustain is an act of justice. Repairing harm means investing in the health of people, systems, and futures. Every dollar spent reflects a choice: to perpetuate inequity or to repair it. When we fund what restores such as housing, treatment, safety, education, or opportunity, then we turn apology into action. A budget is a moral document, and for too long, communities most harmed by systemic racism have been asked to bear the costs of underinvestment, surveillance, and exclusion. Repair + Investment calls for material commitments, not symbolic gestures. It demands transparency in how resources flow and who benefits from them.

Why It Matters

The Justice Collaboratory and other national research bodies affirm that community trust and long-term safety are impossible without tangible repair. Fiscal decisions are moral and social determinants of health: where money flows, justice follows.

Evidence shows that:

- Reparative investments in housing, education, and healthcare reduce incarceration, homelessness, and emergency-room utilization.
- Participatory budgeting processes increase civic participation and transparency, improving perceptions of government legitimacy.
- Community-led Re-Granting models empower residents to direct funds toward locally defined healing priorities: trauma recovery and mitigation strategies, youth mentorship, re-entry support, and restorative practices.
- Economic equity initiatives that center Black and minority-owned businesses.

Core Calls to Action / Key Partners

- Redirect local budgets toward prevention, treatment, and community wellness.
- Create participatory budgeting processes with resident leadership.
- Establish transparent annual equity spending reports.

Key Partners: County Board, Finance Committees, Community Development Organizations, Local Universities, Philanthropic Partners.

COMMUNITY VOICE
PUBLIC COMMENT
DECEMBER 2024

“Justice is a budget line, and the balance is overdue. Stop telling us there’s no money when there’s always money for punishment. We need investments in people, not prisons.”

— BETH LANGEN

SIGNATURE PRIORITY #5: EDUCATION + LIBERATION

When we know better, we become better.

Issue Statement

A healthy community learns, grows, and liberates together. Education is the architecture of liberation. Knowledge equips communities to name injustice and imagine alternatives. For generations, marginalized voices have been left out of curricula, decision-making, and civic life. Education + Liberation restores those voices and insists that learning be a tool for freedom, not control. To educate is to expand empathy; to liberate is to transform systems so that learning translates into equitable action.

Why It Matters

Transformative education reduces bias, strengthens democratic participation, and enhances community resilience.

Evidence shows that:

- Culturally responsive and anti-racist education reduces discipline disparities and increases achievement.
- Civic education tied to local history raises youth engagement in governance and service.
- Ongoing professional development in equity and trauma-informed care improves institutional outcomes across sectors.

Core Calls to Action / Key Partners

- Create and fund the Massey Commission Civic Education Initiative.
- Support restorative-justice and anti-bias training in schools and workplaces.
- Develop public storytelling projects to preserve local memory and lessons learned.

Key Partners: School District 186 and surrounding area schools, Colleges + Universities, Faith Communities, Libraries, Cultural Institutions, Media Outlets.

COMMUNITY VOICE

PUBLIC COMMENT

NOVEMBER 2024

**“If we don’t
teach the truth,
we’ll keep
repeating the
same lies.
Our kids
deserve to
know what
happened
here, not
just what’s
comfortable
to say.”**

— GAIL SIMPSON

A man with long hair, wearing a dark jacket, stands in the center of the frame, holding a microphone to his mouth as if speaking. He is in a room with other people in the background, some seated on patterned chairs. The entire image has a purple color overlay. The text 'PART III:' is centered over the man's chest, flanked by two horizontal yellow lines. On the right side of the image, there is a vertical column of seven yellow dots.

PART III:

CALLS TO ACTION

MASSEY COMMISSION CALLS TO ACTION (#1–26)

The Calls to Action

The Signature Priorities of the Massey Commission house each of the Calls to Action. Each Call to Action represents a structural shift toward equity, healing, and shared accountability. Together, they form the blueprint for a Sangamon County where health is practiced and protected — across systems, budgets, and daily lives.

Call to Action #1

Authorize the Installation of a Commemorative Plaque Honoring Sonya Massey and Those Affected by Systemic Injustice

This Call to Action begins with remembrance. By establishing a permanent public marker, Sangamon County honors Sonya Massey's life and names the broader injustice that her death represents. The plaque becomes both a site of mourning and a promise — that the community will not turn away from harm but commit to building systems rooted in safety, accountability, and care.

Actions:

- Public installation of a commemorative plaque at a prominent county or city location.
- Annual recognition events or educational programs highlighting Sonya Massey's legacy and systemic injustice.

Level of Impact:

Springfield (central installation), Sangamon County (educational outreach), all municipalities (optional local tributes).

Accountable Parties:

County Board, Springfield City Council, local historical societies, cultural affairs offices.

*This action advances
Safety + Dignity —
because remembrance
must also be a
safeguard.*

Call to Action #2

Establish a Countywide Interoperable Crisis Response & Dispatch Framework

This resolution calls for a unified crisis response system that prioritizes safety, coordination, and care. By connecting law enforcement, behavioral health, and emergency dispatch into a single framework, the County ensures that residents in crisis receive the right help at the right time. This approach reduces preventable tragedies and centers public health as a core element of public safety.

Actions:

- Creation of a unified 911/dispatch system accessible across municipalities.
- Standardized protocols for crisis triage and resource allocation.
- Reduced response times and duplicated dispatch efforts.

Level of Impact:

Sangamon County (all municipalities), Springfield (major hub).

Accountable Parties:

Sangamon County Emergency Management, City of Springfield Public Safety, municipal police/fire departments, IT/telecommunications vendors.

*This action advances
Safety + Dignity —
because help should
always arrive with
care.*

Call to Action #3

Establish a Pilot Program to Expand Crisis Responder Qualifications and Integrate Individuals with Lived Experience into Behavioral Health Response Systems

This action advances the creation of a compassionate crisis network where behavioral health professionals, peer specialists, and officers work side by side. Expanding responder qualifications ensures that people in distress are met with understanding, not force. It redirects emergency response from punishment toward healing.

Actions:

- Training modules for responders including peers with lived experience.
- Pilot programs in Springfield and one or more municipalities.
- Measurable improvements in crisis resolution and community satisfaction.

Level of Impact:

Springfield, smaller municipalities as pilot sites, countywide scaling plan.

Accountable Parties:

County Health Department, Springfield Police and Fire Departments, local mental health agencies, community advocacy groups.

*This action advances **Safety + Dignity** — because lived experience strengthens every act of care.*

Call to Action #4

Establish Enhanced Law Enforcement Vetting & Hiring Standards

This Call to Action prioritizes the integrity and readiness of those sworn to protect. By implementing enhanced screening and community-informed hiring practices, the County ensures that law enforcement reflects the values of empathy, discipline, and service. It moves beyond qualifications to ask a deeper question: who is worthy of public trust?

Actions:

- Uniform background checks, psychological assessments, and ethics evaluations.
- Reduction in incidents of misconduct.

Level of Impact:

Countywide (all municipal law enforcement).

Accountable Parties:

Sangamon County Sheriff, Springfield Police Department, municipal police departments, Civil Service Commissions.

*This action advances **Safety + Dignity** — because those who protect must first be accountable to the people they serve.*

Call to Action #5

Establish Countywide Psychological Evaluation Standards for First Responders

This resolution centers wellness as a form of prevention. Standardized psychological evaluations safeguard both officers and the public by identifying needs before they become crises. When responders are mentally healthy and supported, every encounter becomes safer.

Actions:

- Biennial mental health screenings for police, fire, EMS.
- Creation of support/referral systems for responders in crisis.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Health Department, municipal public safety departments, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).

*This action advances
Safety + Dignity —
because care must
begin with those who
give it.*

Call to Action #6

Establish Countywide Standards for In-Person Anti-Racism, De-Escalation, and Crisis Intervention Training

This action insists that safety begins with knowledge, reflection, and skill. Mandating trauma-informed and anti-racist training acknowledges the history of harm in policing and commits to transformation through continuous education. It builds officers' capacity to de-escalate, recognize bias, and engage with empathy.

Actions:

- Mandatory in-person annual trainings for all first responders.
- Documentation and reporting of compliance across municipalities.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County HR, municipal HR, Police/Fire Chiefs, community training partners.

*This action advances
Education + Liberation —
because learning
to see one another
clearly is the first step
toward justice.*

Call to Action #7

Expand Law Enforcement Recruitment Pipelines & Require Data-Driven Cluster Hiring Practices

This Call to Action ensures that recruitment reflects community diversity and operational transparency. By using data to track hiring trends and outcomes, the County promotes fairness and accountability within public safety institutions. Representation becomes not symbolic, but systemic.

Actions:

- Recruitment outreach targeting underrepresented populations.
- Data tracking to ensure equitable hiring across Springfield and smaller municipalities.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

Police Chiefs, HR Departments, County Workforce Development.

*This action advances
Truth + Accountability
— because who
serves the public
should mirror the
public itself.*

Call to Action #8

Convene a Countywide Mental Health & Public Safety Coordination Summit to Address Service Capacity and Continuity of Care

This initiative brings together law enforcement, clinicians, and community partners to align systems that too often operate in isolation. The Summit will clarify roles, share data, and strengthen continuity of care across departments. Through coordination, the County builds a bridge between crisis and recovery.

Actions:

- Annual summit with measurable outcomes from action items to align public safety and behavioral health services.
- Creation of a shared database of service capacity and continuity of care.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Health Department, Springfield Health & Human Services, municipal health agencies, non-profits.

*This action advances
Access + Belonging
— because
collaboration is how
communities keep
each other well.*

Call to Action #9

Define Strategic Priorities for the Sangamon County 708 Mental Health Board to Advance Access, Equity, and System Coordination

This resolution focuses the County's mental health investments on equity and measurable impact. By clarifying the 708 Board's strategic priorities, the County ensures that funding follows need — not convenience. Transparent coordination transforms mental health services from fragmented to fair.

Actions:

- Updated funding and service priorities to improve access and equity.
- Transparent reporting on progress and outcomes.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

Sangamon County 708 Board, local municipalities (liaisons).

*This action advances **Repair + Investment** — because equity requires that care be funded where harm has occurred.*

Call to Action #10

Urge the Illinois General Assembly to Enact Qualified Immunity Reform to Strengthen Civil Rights Accountability

This Call to Action aligns Sangamon County with a national movement for justice. By advocating for reform, the County affirms that accountability protects both the public and ethical officers. Law must serve truth, not shield misconduct.

Actions:

- Submission of formal resolutions and advocacy letters.
- Potential legislative reform enhancing civil rights accountability.

Level of Impact:

State-level, supported by county and city advocacy.

Accountable Parties:

County Board, Springfield City Council, legal advocacy partners, community coalitions.

*This action advances **Truth + Accountability** — because justice without accountability is injustice continued.*

Call to Action #11

Establish a Countywide Transparency & Accountability Dashboard for First Responder Oversight

This initiative transforms oversight into visibility. A public dashboard gives residents direct access to data on use of force, complaints, and reforms — turning information into trust. It signals that accountability is not hidden work, but shared civic practice.

Actions:

- Public dashboard tracking complaints, disciplinary actions, and reforms.
- Metrics available for Springfield and smaller municipalities.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

Sheriff, Police Chiefs, County IT, Civilian Oversight Board (future).

*This action advances
Truth + Accountability
— because sunlight
sustains public trust.*

Call to Action #12

Establish a Civilian Oversight Board of Sangamon County for First Responder Accountability

This resolution creates a structure for the community to watch over the systems meant to protect it. Civilian oversight ensures that misconduct is investigated with independence and integrity. Trust grows when the people themselves have a seat at the table.

Actions:

- Formation of a Civilian Oversight Board with subpoena power to conduct investigations.
- Powers to review complaints, recommend reforms, and compel compliance.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Board, legal counsel, community organizations.

*This action advances
Truth + Accountability
— because safety
without oversight is
safety without trust.*

Call to Action #13

Establish a Coordinated Police Accountability & Transparency Framework Between the City of Springfield and Sangamon County

This Call to Action unites jurisdictions around shared standards for transparency and accountability. By synchronizing data systems and procedures, the City and County commit to coherence instead of fragmentation. Together, they model the kind of collaboration that justice demands.

Actions:

- Updated policies & structure, joint investigations, subpoena power to compel documents.
- Unified standards for complaints and disciplinary actions.

Level of Impact:

Springfield + County law enforcement.

Accountable Parties:

City and County Police Departments, Civilian Oversight Board.

*This action advances
Truth + Accountability
— because
consistency is the
language of trust.*

Call to Action #14

Establish the Annual People's Scorecard Summit to Monitor and Report Progress on Massey Commission Reforms

This Call to Action turns accountability into ritual. The People's Scorecard Summit will provide an annual public forum where progress, data, and next steps are shared openly with the community. By meeting each year to measure what has been done and what still must be achieved, the County reinforces that transparency is not a gesture — it is governance.

Actions:

- Publicly reports progress on all Massey Commission reforms.
- Facilitates community feedback and course correction.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

Massey Commission Staff/new entity holding this work, County Board, community advisory groups.

*This action advances
Truth + Accountability
— because justice
only endures when
the people can see it.*

Call to Action #15

Require Countywide Health, Wellness, and Social Vulnerability Data Tracking & Public Accountability Systems

This Call to Action ensures that decisions about health and safety are guided by data that reflect the realities of every neighborhood. Collecting and publishing this information helps identify where need is greatest and where systems fall short. When data tell the truth about inequity, public health becomes a shared responsibility, not a privilege.

Actions:

- Centralized dashboard tracking disparities and outcomes.
- Public reporting for transparency and accountability.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Health Department, municipal health departments, IT/Data partners.

*This action advances
Access + Belonging
— because a healthy
community must
account for every life
within it.*

Call to Action #16

Establish a Countywide Transit Equity Analysis & Mobility Access Framework

This Call to Action redefines mobility as a matter of justice. Access to work, healthcare, and education depends on equitable transportation that connects people across geography and circumstance. By analyzing and improving how people move through the county, Sangamon affirms that movement itself is a right, not a luxury.

Actions:

- Assessment of public transit coverage, cost, and accessibility.
- Implementation of improvements in underserved areas.

Level of Impact:

Countywide, Springfield hub; smaller municipalities served by feeder routes.

Accountable Parties:

County Planning, Springfield Transit Authority, municipal planning departments.

*This action advances
Access + Belonging
— because true
freedom includes the
ability to get where
you need to go.*

Call to Action #17

Require Comprehensive Equity & Accessibility Reviews and Departmental Inclusion Plans

This Call to Action makes equity a daily practice within every department. By requiring each agency to assess its structures, policies, and hiring for inclusion, the County turns reflection into reform. This process builds institutional honesty — naming where barriers exist and committing to remove them.

Actions:

- All departments produce annual inclusion and equity action plans.
- Public reporting on implementation and progress.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County HR, municipal HR, Equity Officers.

*This action advances
Truth + Accountability
— because systems
cannot heal what
they refuse to
examine.*

Call to Action #18

Establish a Sangamon County Resources Portal to Consolidate and Expand Access to Community Services

This initiative brings the county's many services — from housing to health to employment — into one clear, accessible location. The portal simplifies how residents connect to help and ensures that no one is lost in the bureaucracy of need. By organizing compassion into function, Sangamon County strengthens its social safety net.

Actions:

- Centralized online directory of community services.
- Metrics on service utilization and gaps.

Level of Impact:

Countywide, including Springfield and smaller municipalities.

Accountable Parties:

County IT, Health and Human Services, local non-profits.

*This action advances
Access + Belonging
— because belonging
begins with knowing
where to turn.*

Call to Action #19

Establish the Sangamon County Opportunity Access Plan & Equitable Economic Development Framework

This Call to Action transforms economic growth into shared prosperity. By centering antiracist principles, transparent funding, and neighborhood-based investment, the County commits to rebuilding wealth where it was once extracted. Economic repair becomes a tool for restoring dignity and closing opportunity gaps.

Actions:

- Policy reforms and incentives promoting minority-owned businesses.
- Economic growth tied to equity benchmarks.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Economic Development Office, Springfield Economic Development, local Chambers of Commerce.

*This action advances
Repair + Investment
— because justice
must be built into
every budget line.*

Call to Action #20

Require the Publication of Anonymized Lending and Borrower Data to Ensure Financial Transparency and Consumer Protection

This Call to Action shines light on the financial systems that shape residents' lives. Public access to anonymized lending data exposes inequities in credit, loan approvals, and interest rates, giving policymakers and residents the evidence they need to demand fairness. Transparency here is both protection and prevention.

Actions:

- Transparent financial reporting on data for public oversight.
- Identification of inequities in lending and consumer protection.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Treasurer, Springfield Financial Institutions, State Banking Agencies.

*This action advances
Truth + Accountability
— because fairness in
finance begins with
seeing who is left out.*

Call to Action #21

Prioritize Additive Job Creation, Ending Corporate Incentives, & Expanding Workforce Training for Marginalized Residents

This Call to Action calls for growth that gives more than it takes. It shifts public investment away from corporate subsidies and toward the creation of local, living-wage jobs for those historically excluded from opportunity. Through training, partnerships, and accountability, the County ensures that prosperity becomes a shared outcome.

Actions:

- Programs specifying marginalized residents with sustainable employment.
- Metrics on job placement (including level within the institution) and retention.

Level of Impact:

Countywide, Springfield as major employer hub.

Accountable Parties:

County Workforce Development, Springfield Workforce Agencies, Economic Development partners.

*This action advances
Repair + Investment
— because an
equitable economy
must build people,
not just profit.*

Call to Action #22

Advance Equitable Housing, Community Revitalization, and Minority Contractor Capacity Across Sangamon County

This Call to Action roots equity in the places people live. By increasing access to affordable housing, investing in neglected neighborhoods, and expanding opportunities for minority contractors, Sangamon County invests directly in belonging. Revitalization becomes not gentrification, but restoration.

Actions:

- Incentives for minority contractors and developers.
- Expansion of affordable housing and revitalization of underserved neighborhoods.

Level of Impact:

Countywide, Springfield + smaller municipalities designated for revitalization.

Accountable Parties:

County Housing Department, Springfield Housing Authority, municipal planning offices.

*This action advances
Repair + Investment
— because healing
a community begins
with building where
people can thrive.*

Call to Action #23

Expand Preventive and Primary Care Access Through an Integrated Mobile Health Network & Diverse Workforce Development Strategy

This initiative brings healthcare to the people — not the other way around. By coordinating mobile health services and developing a diverse healthcare workforce, the County closes the gap between need and access. Health equity becomes both infrastructure and invitation, ensuring every resident can be seen and served.

Actions:

- Establish a unified countywide Mobile Health Clinic Network.
- Increased programming to recruit & train a more diverse workforce.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Health Department, local hospitals, community health centers.

*This action advances
Access + Belonging
— because
community health is
the truest measure of
collective care.*

Call to Action #24

Establish an Annual Sangamon County Civil Rights and Accountability Summit

This Call to Action makes learning part of public safety. The Civil Rights and Accountability Summit will gather residents, advocates, and law enforcement to learn, train, and rebuild trust together. By centering education on rights and responsibilities, the County strengthens civic literacy and mutual respect.

Actions:

- Cross-sector convening to enhance understanding on civil rights and accountability initiatives.
- Actionable recommendations and annual report publication.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Board, Massey Commission staff (or designated entity), advocacy organizations.

*This action advances
Education + Liberation
— because
knowledge is the first
act of freedom.*

Call to Action #25

Support the Expansion and Countywide Replication of School-Based Peace Rooms & Social-Emotional Learning Programs

This Call to Action places healing at the heart of education. Peace Rooms and social-emotional learning programs teach children how to regulate emotions, resolve conflict, and restore relationships. When schools model care, safety follows.

Actions:

- Expand Peace Rooms and SEL programs in schools across Sangamon County.
- Reduction in student behavioral incidents and improved social-emotional outcomes.

Level of Impact:

Sangamon County schools, Springfield + all school districts in municipalities.

Accountable Parties:

School Districts, County Education Office, community-based youth organizations.

*This action advances
Education + Liberation
— because learning
to heal is part of
learning to live.*

Call to Action #26

Urge Comprehensive Review of the Massey Commission Final Report & Workgroup Findings

This final Call to Action ensures that the Commission's work is studied, understood, and sustained. It calls for every recommendation and report to be reviewed in full, honoring the labor and wisdom that shaped them. Reflection here is not delay — it is due diligence, a commitment to truth that outlives the Commission itself.

Actions:

- Full review and action plan developed for each recommended Call to Action.
- Tracking system to ensure implementation and accountability.

Level of Impact:

Countywide.

Accountable Parties:

County Board, Springfield City Council, municipal leaders, Massey Commission staff or designated entity.

*This action advances
Truth + Accountability
— because the work
only matters if it
continues after us.*

THE MASSEY COMMISSION | Theory of Change

Building Safety, Dignity, and Trust in Sangamon County

SECTION 1

OUR GUIDING VALUES

SECTION 2

WHAT WE DO

SECTION 3

WHO WE SEEK TO IMPACT

SECTION 4

OUR PATHWAY TO CHANGE

If Sangamon County embraces the Massey Commission's Calls to Action — grounded in transparency, accountability, and community partnership — **then** our county will move from systems defined by racialized harm and mistrust **to** systems defined by safety, dignity, and restorative governance.

Because when we center humanity, name harm honestly, and co-create solutions with those most impacted, **healing becomes possible — and justice becomes real.**

The overarching theme of the Massey Commission is racial equity. This principle guides all of our recommended Calls to action, recognizing that systemic racial disparities must be addressed to achieve true justice and opportunity.

“Default to your humanity.”

— A guiding ethic of the Massey Commission

THE MASSEY COMMISSION | Theory of Change

FTF HEADING	MASSEY COMMISSION APPLICATION
THE NEED	<p>Community trust and safety eroded by systemic harm and inequitable policing.</p> <p>Gaps in accountability, transparency, and equitable practices.</p> <p>Disproportionate impact on marginalized populations documented in workgroup findings.</p> <p>Community demand for structural, actionable reform.</p>
OUR APPROACH	<p>Multi-workgroup, collaborative strategy engaging residents, law enforcement, and experts.</p> <p>Equity-centered, evidence-based reform strategies.</p> <p>Prioritize actionable, audacious calls to action with clear accountability.</p> <p>Focus on healing, community voice, and addressing systemic bias.</p>
WHAT WE DO	<p>Produce actionable recommendations mapped to signature priorities.</p> <p>Facilitate community listening sessions and workgroup deliberations.</p> <p>Develop comprehensive reports with crosswalks linking findings to recommendations.</p> <p>Track implementation progress and provide transparent updates.</p>
WHO WE ARE TRYING TO IMPACT	<p>Residents of Sangamon County, with attention to historically marginalized groups.</p> <p>Law enforcement agencies and individual officers.</p> <p>Policymakers and local officials responsible for public safety.</p> <p>Community organizations advocating for systemic change.</p>
THE CHANGE WE EXPECT TO SEE	<p>In Sangamon County:</p> <p>Increased trust and transparency between community and law enforcement.</p> <p>Structural reforms implemented across priority areas.</p> <p>Reduced disparities in policing outcomes.</p> <p>In Springfield:</p> <p>Stronger community engagement in public safety decisions.</p> <p>Enhanced partnerships between city leadership, law enforcement, and residents.</p> <p>Long-term cultural shift toward equity, accountability, and restorative approaches.</p>

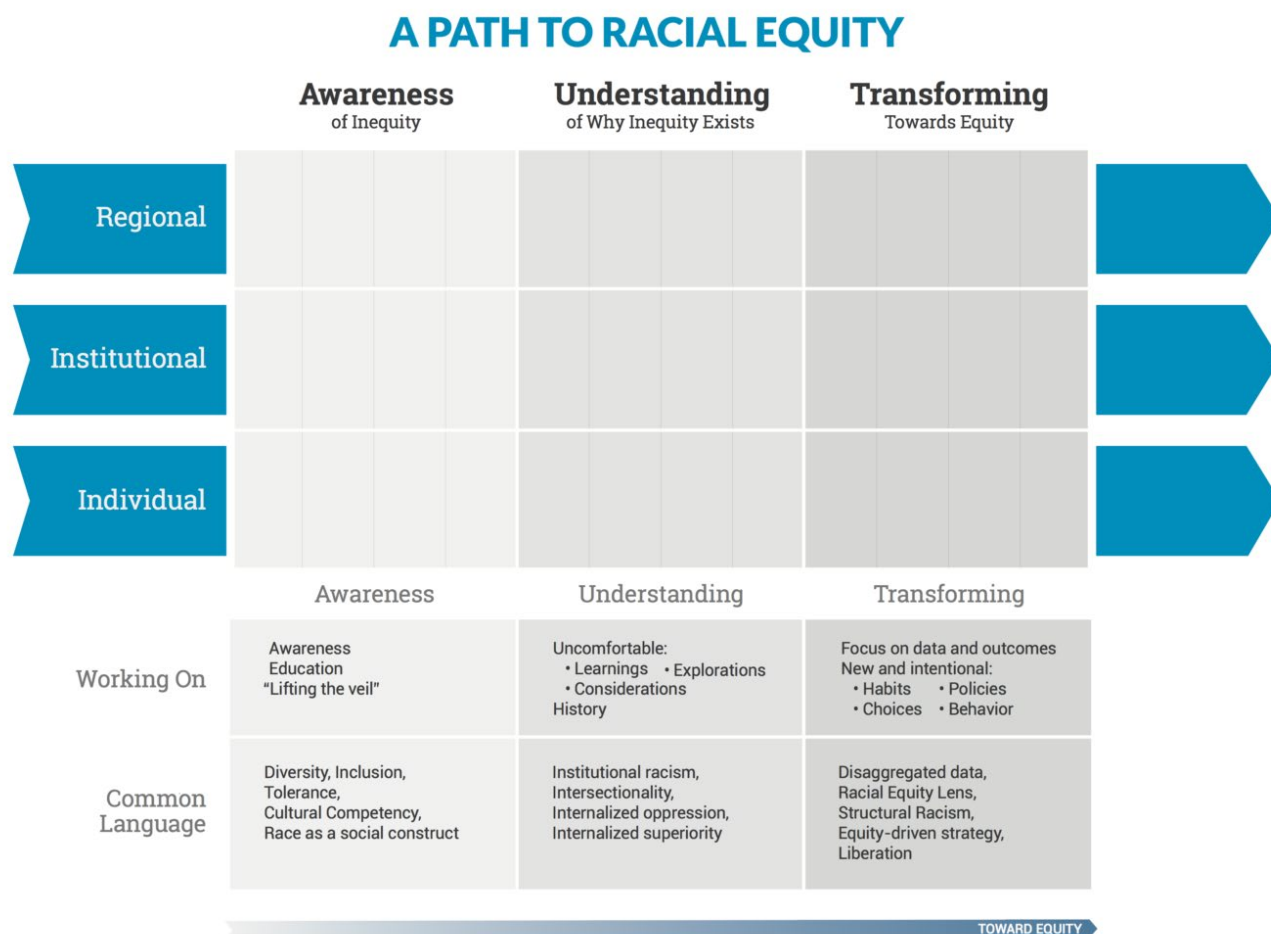
Path to Racial Equity

Racial equity means building a county where race no longer determines who receives protection, opportunity, or dignity — where outcomes are not predictable by race. That is the north star for this Commission’s work. And, as we have witnessed in Sangamon County, the gap between our current state and a just future is not bridged by a single policy or a single decision. It requires a sustained practice: naming harm, understanding the structures that produce that harm, and transforming the systems that should be protecting all of us.

The “Path Toward Racial Equity” framework helps visualize this work. Across the top are three necessary stages: becoming aware of inequity, understanding why inequity exists, and transforming toward equity. Along the left are the levels where change must occur: in individuals, institutions, and the region we share.

We include this framework because it reflects what we have learned over the last 15 months: racial equity is not achieved by intention alone — it is achieved by practice, accountability, and coordinated action across all levels of community life.

Graphic and conceptual framework used with permission from Forward Through Ferguson’s A Path Toward Racial Equity



A man with short, curly hair and a mustache is smiling and speaking into a microphone. He is wearing a dark hoodie with a graphic that includes the word "COLDEST". The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. On the right side, there is a vertical line with several yellow dots. Two horizontal yellow lines intersect the text.

PART IV:

MOVING FORWARD

Health as Practice + Protection: How the Five Signature Priorities Intersect

Health is not confined to hospitals, clinics, or coverage – it is the daily practice of community life. It is the ability to be safe in one's own home, to be heard when harmed, to belong without condition, to heal through repair, and to learn one's way into liberation. When we speak of health in Sangamon County, we are not only talking about medical care; we are talking about the conditions that make human flourishing possible.

Each of the Commission's Signature Priorities reflects a vital organ in the body of a healthy community. They are distinct, but interdependent. Each one is unable to survive without the others.

Safety + Dignity is the heartbeat of health. It protects life and preserves humanity by ensuring that every call for help is met with care, not force. When people trust that systems will protect rather than punish them, their bodies and minds can rest. Safety that honors dignity reduces trauma and restores collective wellbeing.

Truth + Accountability is the immune system of a healthy community. It exposes harm, clears infection, and prevents decay. Truth-telling keeps systems from festering under denial. Accountability is how communities repair their moral and institutional health; without it, pain becomes policy.

Access + Belonging is the community's circulatory system - the means by which resources, opportunities, and care reach everyone. Access ensures no one is left out of the flow of housing, education, transportations, or care. Belonging gives those resources meaning. Together they make equity visible and tangible.

Repair + Investment functions as the community's regenerative system. It recognizes that healing requires resources, not rhetoric, and that budgets are moral documents. When money flows toward prevention, opportunity, and recovery, the community grows stronger and more resilient.

Education + Liberation is the nervous system, connecting memory to movement. It carries lessons from the past into new ways of thinking, leading, and acting. Education makes liberation possible because it allows communities to understand what went wrong, imagine what is right, and build what is next.

When viewed together, these five priorities form a living ecosystem of health:

- Safety + Dignity protects the body.
- Truth + Accountability strengthens the immune system.
- Access + Belonging ensures circulation.
- Repair + Investment promotes regeneration.
- Education + Liberation sustains awareness and purpose.

This is what it means to practice health as protection - to build systems that keep people whole, not systems that break them and, ultimately, fail them. In this framing, health equity is not a department or an outcome; it is the measure of whether a community values its people enough to keep them safe, connected, repaired, and free.

Implementation & Accountability: Making Justice the Practice of Governance

The work of the Massey Commission cannot end with publication. Implementation is the truest measure of accountability. To honor the community's courage, Sangamon County and the City of Springfield must turn the Commission's findings into living commitments – policies, budgets, and practices that restore trust and repair harm. This requires coordinated leadership, transparent metrics, and an intergenerational approach that keeps the work alive long after the Commission sunsets.

Responsibilities of the County Board

The Sangamon County Board, in creating this Commission, holds the authority and resources to transform recommendations into reality. Its responsibilities include:

- Adoption and integration of the Commission's Calls to Action within County policy, budget, and departmental planning.
- Establishment of an Implementation Task Force to oversee cross-departmental progress on public safety, mental health, and equity initiatives.
- Annual Equity Hearings to evaluate progress on resource allocation, hiring, and community outcomes.
- Transparency in data and budgets, ensuring that County spending reflects the priorities of safety

Strategic Goals: In Service of Our Shared Humanity

The Massey Commission's Calls to Action are not meant for reflection alone. They are meant to move us—from good intentions to measurable change. Each goal is a promise: that we will act, learn, and stay accountable to the people who live here.

These Strategic Goals form a living roadmap, connecting today's urgent needs with the long-term work of equity and trust. Some focus on immediate progress: building transparency, strengthening accountability, and showing that change is visible. Others are built for endurance, ensuring that our systems hold even when leadership or public attention shifts.

We are measuring what matters

Governance and Accountability: Create an Implementation Oversight Group and issue public progress reports every six months.

Mental Health Coordination: Expand community-based crisis response and reduce law enforcement-only interventions.

Equity Reviews: Require every department to examine how race, disability, language, and income affect access—and publish annual progress reports.

Data Transparency: Share disaggregated data through open dashboards and host community review sessions that invite critique and collaboration.

Education Reform: Track educator diversity and ensure trauma-informed, trauma-mitigating practices are real, not rhetorical.



Economic Mobility: Measure small business growth, workforce participation, and wealth creation in historically underserved neighborhoods.

Housing and Transportation: Monitor affordable housing and transit routes that reconnect people to opportunity.

Community Trust: Use tools like the Social Vulnerability Index to track whether residents feel safer, healthier, and more seen—because data without dignity is not progress.

Transformation takes both urgency and endurance. These goals bridge the distance between what is and what should be—between the systems we have and the community we deserve.

The future we are building in Sangamon County is one where institutions respond to people, not the other way around. Where equity and accountability become daily practice. And where every resident has the opportunity to thrive, to feel safe, and to belong.

Follow our progress. Hold us accountable. Stay engaged.

Together, we can build the kind of community that reflects the best of who we are—and the best of who we can become.

Short-Term Strategic Goals (0–2 Years)

Focus: Implementation, Transparency, and Capacity-Building

Build Governance and Accountability Now

- Launch the Implementation Oversight Group to track every Call to Action, publish clear metrics, and deliver semiannual progress updates.
- Assign lead entities (State of Illinois, City, County, School District, Law Enforcement, Health Systems, Community Coalitions) to own each action item and drive results.

Activate the Sangamon County 708 Board for Mental Health

- Forge strong coordination between crisis response, probation services, and behavioral health providers.
- Set funding guidelines to ensure sustainable community-based crisis services beyond law enforcement.

Demand Equity-Centered Policy Reviews

- Require every city and county department to complete an Equity and Accessibility Review of existing policies, programs, and budgets.
- Insist on measures for race, disability, language, and socioeconomic impact in every review.

Strengthen Crisis and Safety Systems Immediately

- Implement CESSA-aligned dispatch protocols and launch real-time data dashboards.
- Pilot expanded, community-driven crisis response programs putting people first.

Elevate Representation and Community Voice

- Redesign boards, commissions, and advisory groups to reflect our community's diversity and lived experience.
- Formalize partnerships with grassroots and faith-based organizations, empowering trusted messengers and navigators.

Lay the Foundation for Data and Transparency

- Collect disaggregated data (race, gender, disability, income) across city and county systems.
- Publish an annual Equity and Access Report and host community review sessions ensuring everyone's voice is heard.

Long-Term Strategic Goals (3–7 Years)

Focus: Systemic Change, Equity Infrastructure, and Sustainability

Institutionalize Equity Accountability [Framework]

- Create a permanent Office of Equity and Accountability to monitor implementation, track outcomes, and ensure public reporting.
- Embed equity impact assessments into every budget, program, and procurement process.

Transform Behavioral Health for Good

- Fully integrate 988, CESSA, and 708 Board frameworks into a unified mental health and crisis response system.
- Expand workforce development for behavioral health professionals, including those with lived experience.

Achieve Economic Equity and Mobility

- Roll out an Economic Equity Action Plan with clear outcomes for workforce participation, small business growth, and wealth creation in historically disinvested neighborhoods.
- Shift public investment to community-based organizations and neighborhoods facing the highest inequities.

Reform Education and Youth Development

- Ensure representative teacher diversity and universal access to culturally responsive education and mental health supports.
- Embed restorative and trauma-informed, trauma-mitigating practices as standard policy in every school.

Expand Housing, Transportation, and Access Infrastructure

- Guarantee equitable access to safe, affordable, and accessible housing across all wards and neighborhoods.
- Build reliable public transportation connecting east-side communities to jobs and education.

Measure What Matters: Data, Impact, and Public Trust

- Use Social Vulnerability Index and other community-level metrics to measure improvements in safety, health, and wellbeing.
- Maintain open data dashboards and robust community feedback mechanisms to sustain accountability and trust.



Outcome of The Vision

By pursuing these goals, Sangamon County moves boldly from fragmented, reactive systems to a coordinated, community-centered model that prioritizes safety, health, and opportunity for all residents. This transformation means that public institutions, whether in government, education, health, or law enforcement, will operate with a new level of transparency, equity, and accountability. For successful operationalizing of these goals, Sangamon County will model inclusive governance via subcommittee that meets regularly to coordinate and organize around these goals.

In this future, every person in Sangamon County will have equitable access to essential services, regardless of race, income, disability, or neighborhood. Decision-making will be guided by robust data and ongoing community input, ensuring that policies and programs reflect the lived experiences and needs of the people they serve. Annual Equity and Access Reports, open data dashboards, and regular community review sessions will foster trust and keep institutions answerable to the public.

Safety systems will be proactive and people-centered, integrating mental health supports and crisis response programs that go beyond traditional law enforcement. Education will be reformed to guarantee culturally responsive teaching and trauma-informed/trauma-mitigating practices, supporting youth development and lifelong learning. Economic mobility will be advanced through targeted investments in workforce development, targeted small business growth, and neighborhood revitalization.

Housing and transportation will be accessible and reliable, connecting all communities to opportunities for employment, education, and wellness. The county's commitment to equity will be institutionalized through permanent offices and ongoing policy reviews, ensuring that progress is sustained and measurable.

Conclusion: The Courage to Name What Hurts

In the end, the Massey Commission's work has always been an act of love. That love is fierce, grieving, and uncompromising. Love for a woman whose name this county will never forget. Love for a community that keeps showing up even when hope feels heavy. Love for trust, even when truth demands that we look directly at what we've rather turn away from.

Among the many voices that shaped this journey, one continues to echo from the Public Comment portion of our August 2025 meeting where we absorbed lessons from the experts from Forward Through Ferguson. Beth Langen, a community member, spoke words that pierced through politeness and reminded us why this Commission exists at all: "Racism must be identified as the problem, or the solutions will never change it."

She told us not to soften the truth. And we didn't. We answered her charge and that of the larger community with an audacious list of Calls to Action, written in courage and conviction.

We refused to dilute the truth to make it easier to swallow. We wrote what justice required, not what power preferred. We pointed to the leadership already alive in this community – the mothers, the ministers, the mentors, the healers – and we listened, deeply, to the people we were charged to represent.

Yet even now as this report closes, the story has not ended. We stand in a tension between two forms of finality – the sunset of this Commission and the sentencing of the man who killed Sonya Massey. When his charge was reduced from first-degree to second-degree murder, our grief returned like a wave that knocked us off our feet. We are still standing in that tension, bracing for the possibility that, once again, justice might not arrive.

If true justice is denied, this community will be devastated again – but not destroyed. We have, in this report, 26 powerful ways to find our way through it to build the beloved community we have always deserved.

Beth's words called us to hold the lives of Ms. Sonya Massey, Mr. Earl Moore Jr., and Mr. Gregory Small Jr. as moral anchors. Each of them lived at the violent intersections of race, disability, and neglect. Each of them called for help and was met with harm. Each of them deserved protection, not punishment.

Beth reminded us that the story of disability in America cannot be separated from the story of race. For centuries, Blackness itself was treated as a 'defect' used to justify enslavement, experimentation, and exclusion. Ableism – the lie that human worth is measured by normalcy, productivity, or compliance – has always been racism's silent partner. Together they have excused brutality, denied care, and normalized the suffering of Black and disabled bodies.

She named what we too have seen: the reflect to locate fault in the victim instead of the system. It is the same pattern that called George Floyd's heart disease the problem instead of the knee on his neck. It is the same logic that explains away cruelty as "procedure." That quiet violence of re-framing harm as inevitability is what allows injustice to masquerade as order.

Centering Sonya every step of the way, Beth's charge to us was simple and radical: "Do not design for how the dominant white system can serve everyone. Design for how it should have served Sonya."

That is our compass. That is our obligation.

We cannot rewrite what happened to Sonya – a mother, a daughter, a woman whose light was extinguished in her own home – but we can ensure her name becomes shorthand for courage and care, for the community’s refusal to look away. Her absence is not just our grief. It is our mandate.

So this report ends as it began – with Sonya. With her name spoken aloud. With her humanity reclaimed. With her courage standing as both question and command.

Because justice is not a moment of outrage – it is a practice of care. And care is the work of courage. And courage is what Sonya Massey called forth from us.

The Massey Commission will sunset, but the movement will not.

This is not an ending, it is a transfer of responsibility.

To every person who reads these words, to every official who signs a budget, to every resident who still believes in repair – the torch is now in your hands. Your shift is upon you. Kindly report for work.

May Sonya Massey’s name forever summon the courage to name what hurts and to heal what we will no longer ignore.

What’s Next for the Massey Commission?

The Massey Commission was born from heartbreak and from the will of a community that refused to turn away. What began as an act of public response has become a blueprint for transformation. This report does not mark the end of our work. It names what must come next and who must carry it forward.

Our charge was not simply to study inequity but to confront it. Every recommendation in this document reflects both the data and the lived experiences of those who called for something better. It is evidence and testimony bound together. It asks Sangamon County, its institutions, and its residents to take responsibility for a shared future that protects every life and honors every voice.

What comes next belongs to the community that created this Commission in the first place. As we prepare for a public feedback session to shape whatever entity follows—its purpose, structure, governance, funding model, and core values—we are clear about one thing: this next chapter cannot be built behind closed doors. It must be rooted in the same courage, clarity, and community wisdom that brought us here. The work ahead is to decide, together, what enduring form this effort should take and how it will remain accountable to the people it exists to serve.



PART V:

APPENDICES

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Full List of Calls to Action

The last Call to Action #26 is a structural close — making the entire framework self-referential and accountable, reinforcing Truth and Accountability as both a Signature Priority and a practice of governance.

Legacy Call to Action #26

The Massey Commission was born from heartbreak but moved with purpose. Across a year of listening, learning, and laboring, we built something together that belongs to this community. The pages that follow are not just documentation; they are testimony. They hold the weight of stories, data, and dreams entrusted to us by the people of Sangamon County.

To read this report is to take part in the work. Every chart, every quote, every recommendation represents voices that refused to be silent and truths that demanded to be named. This Commission did not seek perfection - we sought honesty. We sat in discomfort, disagreement, and grief, and we learned that justice work is never clean. It is slow, iterative, and deeply human.

Our final call is not to act in haste, but to act with care. To study the findings of each workgroup, to understand the connections between safety and dignity, health and belonging, truth and accountability. The work of review is itself a form of love - an act of respect for those who gave their time, courage, and expertise to this process.

The Commission asks that Sangamon County and the City of Springfield do more than archive this report. Read it. Revisit it. Discuss it in classrooms and board rooms and living rooms. Let the data become dialogue, and let dialogue become decision. Transparency must not be symbolic; it must be lived.

This report is not an ending - it is a beginning written in the language of persistence. The future will measure not what we wrote, but what we built together. The work now belongs to everyone who believes this County can choose justice as its practice and humanity as its protection.

Appendix B: Extended Justice Collaboratory Research

Appendix C: All Accountable Parties Engagement Summaries

Appendix D: Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

Appendix E: Massey Commission Community Polling Summary

On September 16, 2024, we conducted a Community Polling session as a first step to gain a clearer understanding of the individuals participating in our process. This approach allowed us to establish a baseline of who was present, capturing key demographic and engagement information in real time. To complement this, we issued an anonymous survey using an open-text poll on Slido, creating a safe and accessible space for participants to share their thoughts and perspectives candidly. Through this platform, we asked a series of questions designed to capture not only participants' immediate reactions and experiences, but also their insights, expectations, and suggestions for how the process could be strengthened. This combination of polling and open-ended feedback provided

both quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring that every voice had an opportunity to be heard and considered in shaping the ongoing work.

Community Priorities

The Massey Commission committed to listen with intention. Public comment was never treated as procedural—it was the pulse of our work. Each speaker, whether offering praise, critique, or pain, sharpened our understanding of what justice required. These remarks—sometimes raw, sometimes resolute—helped to shape the Commission’s Calls to Action and ensure that our recommendations were grounded in community truth. This is an emotional landscape of our meetings filled with grief, frustration, urgency, exhaustion, and hope – things we lived with in all their complexity during the Massey Commission’s time.

Throughout the Commission’s engagement process, community members provided rich, candid feedback on what they hope the Massey Commission will accomplish, what concerns them, and where they believe attention should be focused. Their input reflects a shared desire for accountability, equity, and actionable reform.

Emerging Themes from Community Feedback: “What should the Massey Commission prioritize?”

1. Accountability, Justice, and Integrity

A central theme across all feedback is the need for accountability from law enforcement officers and elected officials. Community members emphasized justice for Sonya Massey, integrity from those in positions of power, and consequences for behavior that undermines trust or safety. Respondents repeatedly stressed that the Commission’s work must result in tangible change rather than symbolic gestures or reports that remain unimplemented.

2. Law Enforcement Reform and Institutional Change

Direct reform of law enforcement emerged as a top priority. Participants identified hiring practices, officer training, and the implementation of de-escalation and restorative practices as critical to building safer, more equitable policing. The Commission is expected to address systemic racism, mitigate community mistrust, and support structural changes that make law enforcement more effective, culturally competent, and responsive to the neighborhoods they serve.

3. Mental Health and Crisis Response

Community members highlighted the importance of integrated mental health services and improved emergency response, particularly for situations involving trauma or individuals experiencing mental health crises. They recognized that untreated trauma—both among officers and within the community—can exacerbate harm, and called for trauma-informed, compassionate, and evidence-based approaches.

4. Communication, Transparency, and Inclusion

Transparency in procedures, policies, and discipline was a recurring concern, alongside the need for inclusion of marginalized voices and meaningful participation from the Massey family. The community expressed skepticism that without deliberate efforts, decision-making and oversight could be diluted or co-opted. Participants emphasized the importance of asking the right questions, gathering the right data, and ensuring that findings lead to real-world accountability.

5. Cultural Competency and Anti-Racism

Implicit bias training, cultural competency, and anti-racist practices were highlighted as critical to transforming both policing and broader community interactions. Respondents emphasized that officers must be equipped to serve diverse populations effectively and sensitively, and that the Commission's work should actively address structural inequities that have historically harmed Black communities and other marginalized groups.

6. Priority Areas from Ranking Poll

When asked to rank specific areas of focus, participants consistently prioritized:

1. Law Enforcement Hiring & Training
2. Systemic Racism & Community Mistrust
3. Emergency Response & Crisis Intervention
4. Integrated Mental Health Services
5. Implicit Bias & Cultural Competency

While broader issues such as community education, economic disparities, and public health were considered important, they were ranked as secondary to urgent policing and systemic reforms. These rankings reinforce the community's call for actionable, operational, and structural changes that directly impact safety, equity, and justice.

7. Vision for the Commission

Overall, community members envision a Commission that is bold, accountable, and results-driven. They hope it will not only honor the legacy of Sonya Massey but also inspire lasting reform in law enforcement, foster trust and collaboration between the community and police, and establish mechanisms to prevent future harm. Their voices reflect a strong desire for measurable outcomes, equitable solutions, and meaningful shifts in power toward justice and safety for all residents of Springfield and Sangamon County.

Emerging Themes from Community Feedback [Sept 2024]

1. Police Accountability and Reform

- Calls for holding officers accountable for misconduct, including transparency in discipline and complaints review.
- Interest in reforming hiring practices and raising standards for new officers.
- Removing racist officers and ensuring antiracism in policing practices.
- Suggestions that financial consequences for misconduct, such as lawsuit payouts, come from officer pensions rather than the community.

2. Mental Health Awareness and Support

- Emphasis on the mental health of both police officers and community members.
- Need for mental health education, trauma-informed approaches, and assistance during calls involving mental health crises.
- Recognition that untreated trauma in officers can impact the community.

3. Restorative and Community-Centered Approaches

- Multiple mentions of Restorative Justice as a preferred model for handling conflict.
- Desire to strengthen relationships between police and the community through engagement, collaboration, and better communication.
- Emphasis on compassion, patience, and sensitivity to diverse backgrounds and cultures.

4. Reallocation of Resources

- Several comments advocating for lowering police budgets and reallocating funds, potentially toward community programs.

5. Diversity and Representation

- Calls for hiring more African Americans and ensuring diverse representation in decision-making positions.
- Ensuring that police are welcoming to people from different cultural backgrounds and sensitive to non-status-quo communities.

6. Communication and Transparency

- Requests for clearer communication regarding police actions, discipline, and mental health interventions.
- Importance of transparency to build trust between the community and law enforcement.

7. Engagement and Collaboration

- Encouragement for initiatives that bring community members and police together to find common ground.
- Continuing neighborhood policing efforts and strengthening local presence.

Emerging Themes from Community Feedback

When asked *“What do you hope the Massey Commission will accomplish?”*

1. Justice, Accountability, and Integrity

- Strong desire for accountability from law enforcement officers and elected officials.
- Calls for justice for Sonya Massey and recognition of her family’s legacy.
- Emphasis on integrity and consequences for behavior unbecoming of public servants.

2. Police Reform and Institutional Change

- Support for effective change within law enforcement, including de-escalation strategies, oversight, and institutional improvements.
- Interest in citizen oversight boards and greater community involvement in monitoring law enforcement.

3. Transparency and Communication

- Expectations for clear communication about law enforcement procedures, policies, and decision making.
- Desire for community awareness of challenges, progress, and measurable outcomes (“quantifiable change”).

4. Community Safety, Inclusion, and Trust

- Goals for a healthier, safer, and more welcoming community for all races, beliefs, and walks of life.
- Strengthening relationships between law enforcement and the community, ensuring officers understand and engage with the neighborhoods they serve.

5. Expertise and Learning

- Recommendations to include experts with experience in policing reform, restorative justice, and anti-racist practices to guide the Commission,
- Encouraging solutions that are informed, sustainable, and respected by both law enforcement and the community.

6. Anti-Racism and Cultural Awareness

- Spreading anti-racist practices and cultural sensitivity throughout Springfield and Sangamon County,
- Ensuring law enforcement is responsive and inclusive of all marginalized groups.

Part 1 Narrative Summary of Polling Results

Community members shared a clear vision for what they hope the Massey Commission will accomplish. At the forefront is justice and accountability—both for law enforcement and elected officials—with repeated calls to honor the legacy of Sonya Massey. Residents expressed a desire for meaningful police reform and institutional change, including the adoption of de-escalation practices, oversight mechanisms, and transparent policies. Alongside these structural goals, participants emphasized the importance of cultivating trust, safety, and inclusion within the community, ensuring that officers are familiar with and responsive to the neighborhoods they serve. Many respondents highlighted the need for expert guidance and anti-racist frameworks to inform Commission recommendations, underscoring the expectation that solutions will be both equitable and actionable. Ultimately, the community envisions a Commission that not only fosters accountability but also strengthens relationships, understanding, and long-term positive change between law enforcement and the people they serve.

Emerging Themes from Community Feedback

When asked *“What concerns you most about the Massey Commission and/or its work?”*

[114 responses, 87 participants]

1. Lack of Accountability and Follow-Through

- Fear that the Commission will not result in meaningful change, becoming just another “committee” with reports that sit on a shelf.
- Concern that actions may be symbolic rather than substantive, without clear solutions or measurable outcomes.
- Worry that those in power may resist change or dilute the Commission’s recommendations.

2. Authority, Resources, and Support

- Perception that the Commission may lack the power, funding, and resources to implement recommendations.
- Need for actual funding and tangible support to translate findings into actionable change.

3. Representation and Inclusion

- Concern that the voices of those most affected will not be included, particularly marginalized communities.
- Ensuring the Massey family has a meaningful role in the process.
- Attention to diversity and avoiding leadership dominated by the wrong individuals.

4. Structural and Systemic Challenges

- Fear that the Commission's work may be co-opted or manipulated by political or personal interests.
- Potential for institutional resistance or self-protective behavior from law enforcement or other power holders.
- Recognition of systemic issues like misogyny and structural inequities that may hinder progress.

5. Critical Social Concerns

- Anxiety about repeated harm to Black community members or other vulnerable populations before meaningful reform occurs.
- Concern about law enforcement outcomes with individuals experiencing mental health conditions.

6. Truth and Transparency

- Importance of asking the right questions, uncovering the full truth, and shifting power toward accountability.
- Fear that reports could be "whitewashed" or sanitized, hiding uncomfortable realities.

Part 2 Narrative Summary of Polling Results

Community members expressed deep concerns about the potential limitations of the Massey Commission and its work. At the forefront is the fear that the Commission may fail to bring about substantive change, instead becoming another committee with recommendations that go unimplemented. Respondents emphasized the need for clear accountability, actionable solutions, and measurable outcomes, alongside sufficient authority, funding, and resources to ensure recommendations can be realized. Representation and inclusion were central concerns, with repeated calls to elevate the voices of those most affected, ensure diversity in leadership, and honor the role of the Massey family. Participants also highlighted structural and systemic barriers, including potential resistance from those in power, political manipulation, and ongoing social inequities. Finally, the community stressed the importance of transparency, truth-telling, and genuine power shifts to avoid superficial or sanitized outcomes. Collectively, these concerns reflect a strong desire for the Commission to be effective, courageous, and grounded in accountability and justice.

When asked *"How should the Massey Commission prioritize the following: Law Enforcement Hiring & Training, Systemic Racism & Community Mistrust, Emergency Response & Crisis Intervention, Integrated Mental Health Services, and Implicit Bias & Cultural Competency?"* [114 responses, 87 participants]

Step 1: Identify priorities from the ranking poll

The poll shows 94 participants ranked 8 areas, and the results indicate which issues the community sees as most urgent. Lower numeric values indicate higher priority (closer to "rank 1" on average).

Top Priorities (lowest average ranking)

1. Law Enforcement Hiring & Training – 1.521
2. Systemic Racism & Community Mistrust – 1.457
3. Emergency Response & Crisis Intervention – 0.904
4. Integrated Mental Health Services – 0.872
5. Implicit Bias & Cultural Competency – 0.564

Lower Priorities

- 6. Economic Disparities & Service Accessibility – 0.309**
- 7. Community Education on Health & Safety – 0.191**
- 8. Public & Community Health – 0.181**

Observation: The community prioritized direct law enforcement reforms, addressing systemic racism, and improving crisis and mental health responses. Broader societal issues like economic disparities and general public health were ranked lower.

Step 2: Thematic Clustering

1. Law Enforcement Focus

- Hiring practices, training, and accountability were seen as the most immediate priorities.
- Includes ensuring officers are equipped with the skills, standards, and cultural awareness necessary to serve the community effectively.

2. Systemic Barriers & Trust

- High ranking of systemic racism and community mistrust signals that structural inequities remain a major concern.
- The Commission is expected to address historical and ongoing patterns of inequity and build trust between law enforcement and the community.

3. Mental Health & Crisis Response

- Integration of mental health services and improved emergency response were identified as urgent operational needs.
- Highlights community demand for trauma-informed, supportive, and effective interventions during crises.

4. Cultural Competency & Bias Awareness

- Implicit bias and cultural competency training is a key supporting priority, indicating recognition that internal attitudes and awareness directly affect policing outcomes.

5. Lower Immediate Focus Areas

- Community education, economic disparities, and broader public health were ranked lower, suggesting participants see these as important but secondary to urgent policing and systemic reforms.



Part 3: Narrative Summary

Community members provided clear guidance on how the Massey Commission should prioritize its efforts. The highest priorities centered on direct law enforcement reform, including hiring practices, officer training, and addressing systemic racism and mistrust within the community. Equally important were improvements to emergency response, crisis intervention, and integrated mental health services, reflecting a desire for officers to respond effectively and compassionately in challenging situations. Implicit bias and cultural competency training were also highlighted, underscoring the community's recognition that attitudes, awareness, and sensitivity directly impact policing outcomes. While issues such as community education, economic disparities, and public health were noted, participants ranked them as secondary to the immediate need for policing reforms and trust-building initiatives. Collectively, these rankings demonstrate a community focused on actionable, systemic, and operational changes that directly affect safety, equity, and justice.

Acknowledgements

COMMISSIONERS AND WORKGROUPS

Commissioners

Gerry Castles
Veronica Espina
Margaritta Fultz
Breonna Roberts
Brian Wojcicki

Calvin Christian
JoAnn D. Johnson, co-chair
Vanessa Nelson-Knox
Kristin Rubbelke

Sunshine Clemons
Jerry Kruse, co-chair
Susan Phillips
Bob Wesley

*ex-Commissioner Sontae Massey became staff on the Massey Commission in April of 2025

Workgroups

“The work of the Massey Commission will not be led by co-chairs and commissioners alone,” said JoAnn Johnson, co-chair. “We need workgroup participants, subject matter experts and an army of volunteers to get the work done in Sangamon County.”

Law Enforcement Hiring, Training, Wellness and Cultural Competency

Co-Leaders: Deborah Anthony and Sunshine Clemons

Members: Tyshianna Bankhead, Gerry Castles, Mylas Copeland, Jerrilyn Dixon, Betsy Goulet, JoAnn Johnson, Austin Randolph Jr., and Timothy Sommer

Integrated Mental Health Services and Emergency Response

Co-Leaders: Penny Powell and Brian Wojcicki

Members: Jenna Broom, Aaron Cahill, Emile Cherrone, Sam Collins Jr., Margaritta Fultz, Vinod Gupta, Deanna Horton, Jace King, Sicely Kluge, Krishna Taneja, and Samantha White

Community Education on Public Health and Safety

Co-Leaders: Kristin Rubbelke, and Christopher Smyre

Members: Susan Duke, Julie Hoffman, Elizabeth McGarry, Tryis McPike, Vanessa Nelson-Knox, Gail Simpson, Derrick Stapleton, David Vail, and Bob Wesley

Economic Disparities and Service Accessibility

Co-Leaders: Veronica Espina and Sheila Caldwell

Members: Pam Frazier, Kathryn Harris, Raynard Johnson, Beth Langen, Shadia Massey, Legrand L. Malany, April Poole, Breonna Roberts, and Holly Thompson

Appendices

We asked important questions about who has the responsibility to act. As we were charged by the Sangamon County Board, we also note other entities that hold pieces of this. The City of Springfield including the City Council, the Springfield Police Department, and the mayor. We honor the work currently being done by various community organizations as well as residents and constituents of Sangamon County. State of Illinois

FROM THE 6 MONTH REPORT:

While not an investigative body that will examine the exact details of a single tragedy, the Massey Commission is a forum for analysis and inquiry into the systems and conditions that serve as context for the tragic killing of Sonya Massey and others who have suffered at the hands of helping professionals in Sangamon County.

Importantly, this work unfolds in one of the most racially segregated communities in America—a reality that is the ever-present backdrop to every conversation, recommendation, and action we undertake. The deep racial divides in housing, education, healthcare, and policing are not abstract statistics; they shape lived experience and must be confronted as we push for systemic change.

We are unwavering in our commitment to create a space in which every voice, especially those most harmed, is amplified, and where present circumstances are relentlessly challenged with actionable, bold solutions that demand change. The primary scope of work for the Massey

Commission involves policy review and recommendations. Our workgroups play a critical role in the development of those recommendations.

The Massey Commission will produce a comprehensive report outlining its recommendations and proposed actions within one year of its establishment. This document serves as our 6-month progress report. This progress report mostly highlights the ways we have organized the Commission and its work so far. That organization and structure have allowed us to advance five key actions that are detailed in this report.

“Our lane is to put out as much as possible,” Bethany Johnson-Javois of Forward Through Ferguson said at our August 2025 meeting. She continued, “And we all know and believe something will stick, but we don’t know what will stick. And the thing that you think will, it is the opposite, and it will surprise you.”