10-year impact in Oklahoma

Standardizing sentencing practices within felony classes could amount to $16.8M in reduced marginal incarceration costs over 10 years, while reducing prison populations in Oklahoma by 969. Oklahoma’s estimated marginal cost of incarceration is $15.74 per person per day and includes daily costs like food, clothing, and medical costs (OMES 2023).

The opportunity

Oklahoma has the 2nd highest incarceration rate in the United States, with 639 out of every 100,000 Oklahoma residents serving time in state prisons. As of February 14, 2022, 21,257 Oklahomans are committed to state facilities. The state’s high prison population can, in part, be attributed to sentencing practices. Oklahomans convicted of property offenses receive prison terms 70% longer than the national average, and serve 79% longer than the national average for drug offenses.

Cumulative marginal cost avoidance

Under Oklahoma’s current system, approximately 18% of defendants receive sentences higher than the maximum associated with their offense. Adopting a felony classification system—which 36 states currently use—could lend consistency to Oklahoma’s criminal justice system, and offer clarity to defendants and judges alike.

Since 2000, the average prison sentence given in Oklahoma has grown by 1.2 years, a 17% increase.