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A Note to Readers

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A NOTE TO READERS

In September of 2020, Harvard Law School’s Criminal Justice Policy Program submitted its report on Racial Disparities in the Massachusetts Criminal System to Chief Justice Gants. This report, authored by Elizabeth Tsai Bishop, Brook Hopkins, Chijindu Obiofuma, and Felix Owusu, was the final product of a research project requested by Chief Justice Gants. During his annual State of the Judiciary address in 2016, Chief Justice Gants referenced data sourced by the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission demonstrating “great disparity in the rates of imprisonment among Whites, African-Americans, and Hispanics in this Commonwealth.” He urged the legal community to take “a hard look at how we can better fulfill our promise to provide equal justice for every litigant.” To carry out this mission, Chief Justice Gants initiated a collaborative study with Harvard Law School to analyze racial and ethnic imbalances across the Massachusetts criminal system. The report examines racial and ethnic disparities permeating the state’s criminal process by gathering and consolidating data from the Massachusetts Trial Court, the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services, the Department of Correction, the Massachusetts Probation Service, and other agencies.

The report serves as a critical component of Chief Justice Gants’s legacy.¹

¹ The report can be found at: <https://hls.harvard.edu/content/uploads/2020/11/Massachusetts-Racial-Disparity-Report-FINAL.pdf>.