



**STAND UP**  
FOR OHIO

# STAND UP FOR OHIO

## 2018-2019 STRATEGY REPORT



# LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DAMAREO COOPER

Forces have conspired to disrupt our communities and hurt people in the state of Ohio. Budget priorities and our criminal justice system too often strip people of their full humanity, and have allowed ripples of trauma (experienced through economic, social, racial, and sexual violence) to grow into crushing waves that crash into our neighborhoods, eroding the foundation needed to build and sustain safe and healthy communities.

At the same time, we have seen the rampant unchecked accumulation of wealth in Ohio and the nation while public schools fail to receive constitutionally mandated funding and mass incarceration is on the rise. Violence in our neighborhoods and the trauma caused by drug addiction and abuse are spreading across the state through towns and cities, large and small. The voices and votes of directly impacted people and their loved ones are taken for granted or simply ignored.



Stand Up for Ohio exists so people who work and struggle to survive on low wages in communities that lack real access to opportunity have a place to build and wield power. We exist to push back against the misuse of power by leaders unfit to win a better future for our children, our families, and ourselves. Together we must stand for our values, for our families, and against empire.

Stand Up for Ohio has organized to build a base of leaders over the past decade who can connect criminal justice to economic justice issues. We have won campaigns that challenge the school to prison pipeline and fought for health care and to protect the safety net for vulnerable children and families. We've talked to hundreds of thousands of voters and trained hundreds of leaders from communities that have been ignored, polluted, underserved, and disinvested in by powerful corporate actors and their elected lackeys.

I'm honored to be in this struggle at this time for human rights and dignity. I believe that Stand Up for Ohio is in the right position, has the correct vision, and can lead at this moment. Working together, we have the talent, vision, and people to ensure a safe and healthy Ohio for all of us. Simply put, I believe that we will win!

damareo j. cooper

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Cooper". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.



## STAND UP FOR OHIO

Formed in 2007, Stand Up for Ohio (SUFO) is a coalition of community, labor, civil rights, and environmental groups committed to building a coordinated movement for racial, social, and economic justice in Ohio. In 2011, Stand Up for Ohio directed the allied outreach work for We Are Ohio, the community-labor coalition that successfully repealed Ohio's anti-collective bargaining legislation.

Since then, Stand Up for Ohio has run large-scale 501(c)4 electoral programs in cities across the state, knocking on hundreds of thousands of doors and engaging thousands of Ohioans in trainings, house meetings, and direct actions related to economic and racial justice. In 2016, Stand Up for Ohio ran GOTV programs in Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, Akron, Warren, Cleveland, and Youngstown, engaging voters through text, email, direct mail, by phone, and in person.

We believe that by mobilizing voters around issues that affect their families and their neighborhoods—issues like community/police relations, climate change, jobs, and early childhood education—we can fundamentally shift the balance of power in our cities and at the state level.

## 2018-2019 PROGRAMMING

### VISION FOR 2018-2019

Stand Up For Ohio envisions a more unified and aligned Ohio organizing together to win on racial and economic justice. In 2018, we will expand our base to develop new leaders in targeted counties and move a unique coalition of voters to take on the state's criminal justice system in a way that promotes strong public investment in communities and families. Over the next 18 months, we will:

- Engage with at least 1 million Ohio voters: through canvasses, phone banks, outreach through partner organizations, social media marketing and outreach, and faith outreach, Stand Up for Ohio will have 1 million conversations with voters. Of these 1 million conversations, our goal is to retain 300,000 as activists that we can text, email, call, or mobilize into events and actions.
- Strengthen our current capacity: Stand Up for Ohio currently has organizing staff in 7 cities and communities. These city organizations need continual support and growth to develop leaders and set a bold vision for Ohio's cities and elected leaders.
- Bridge the urban/rural divide - Over the next 3 years we will do 300 popular education trainings in rural communities around issues of economic disenfranchisement.

In 2019, Stand Up for Ohio will organize a statewide

convention that gathers all the volunteers, staff, leaders, allies, and partners to join a conversation about race, class, and economic justice in order to set the agenda for holding newly elected officials accountable.

### INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURE WORK

In addition to our primary purpose programming, SUFO has a strong history in supporting progressive candidates seeking public office up and down the ticket. In 2016 alone, we knocked on over 600,000 doors and placed thousands of calls and text messages to targeted voters in support of federal and local candidates across the state.

Capitalizing on our previous experiences, we intend to target, educate, and mobilize over 250,000 New American Majority voters for the 2018 midterm election in support of progressive candidates seeking federal and statewide office. Many of these targeted individuals are already familiar with SUFO, and therefore know and trust our brand when it comes to who we promote as trusted individuals who will fight for everyday Ohioans. To effectively engage these 250,000 individuals, SUFO knows that it will need to make multiple passes on their doors, place multiple calls and text messages, and even send a few flights of mail to ensure that they know who to vote for and where to vote in November, 2018. All told, we intend to make 7-9 attempts per target to maximize our impact in our targeted universe.

PRISON  
=  
SLAVERY 2017



## 2018-2019 PROGRAMMING, CONTINUED

### CANDIDATE PIPELINE

During the past ten years in Ohio the progressive movement has grown in infrastructure, capacity, and sophistication. Despite these advancements, our movement has fallen behind in recruiting, training, and building a large field of talented progressive leaders and potential candidates. Although some organizations have developed or encouraged leadership among their ranks, the work of candidate and leadership recruitment as well as training and development has been largely fragmented and overlooked. The majority of leaders and candidates are recruited by traditional party structures. This has all too often resulted in ad-hoc, homogenous, and uninspired progressive leadership.

Stand Up for Ohio and LEAD Ohio have partnered to combat these issues by engaging the next generation of progressive leadership across the state of Ohio and offering a wide range of training opportunities. Stand Up has focused largely on lifting up community leaders to train them as organizers and activists, while LEAD Ohio has focused on identifying individuals interested in running for office or leading a candidate or issue campaign. Working together, Stand Up for Ohio and LEAD Ohio have developed a pipeline of leaders that can cross between the movement and electoral spaces to receive guidance and training in whatever role they seek to play in the progressive movement.

## REFORMING OUR BROKEN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

### WHY US AND WHY NOW

In 2018 and 2019, Stand Up for Ohio is aiming to redefine the criminal justice system and bend it towards recovery, access to healthcare, and investment in families and communities for safe neighborhoods. We will broaden our base of organizing into key target geographies that will expand the electorate to include more people of color, low income people, and young people directly impacted by a broken criminal justice system.

Ohio remains at the center of national conversations about community/police relations, racial disparities in the criminal justice system, and the need for an end to mass incarceration. Ohio's prisons are at 138% capacity and inmates are sleeping on the floor due to overcrowding. We are at a crossroads where the decision must be made to either reform our drug laws or continue to heavily invest in the incarceration of Ohio's citizens.

The opioid crisis has created new victims of mass incarceration as some of the hardest hit areas are Ohio's suburban and rural communities. People who never before experienced the unfair judicial system that destroyed communities and lives during the

crack/cocaine epidemic are now being impacted by this War on Drugs. Urban, rural, and de-industrialized towns around Ohio all face chronic disinvestment, weak public infrastructure, and an over-reliance on jails and courts to treat people's mental health and addiction issues. Seizing upon this tragic opportunity with an economic populist frame will enable us to peel off and engage potential voters who either do not usually vote or are traditionally out of alignment. Stand Up for Ohio's experience working with voters around Ohio leads us to understand that there is no shortcut in winning on issues or elections. Voters in all key communities need to be organized into powerful vehicles that will help deliver results and grow leaders capable of promoting and driving their own interests and values in the public arena. The context in which Donald Trump was elected is one in which voters live in communities hit hard by economic disinvestment and weak public leadership. As poverty grows and wealth inequality widens, voters feel a sense of powerlessness. The only response to this that will transform political dynamics in key counties is deep organizing that honors these experiences and names the profiteers of the pain felt by families.

# REFORMING OUR BROKEN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

## OVERVIEW OF THE INITIATIVE

The Ohio Safe and Healthy Communities Campaign steering committee is made up of four core entities: the OOC, the Ohio Transformation Fund, the Alliance for Safety and Justice, and the Ohio Justice and Policy Center. The steering committee is the driving force behind developing the language for the ballot, polling, focus group testing, and general structure development of the campaign.

The campaign is proposing a constitutional amendment that would do four things:

**1. Reclassify drug possession felonies as misdemeanors, because people struggling with addiction need treatment, not prison.** The amendment would reclassify from felony to misdemeanor any crime for obtaining, possessing, or using a drug or drug paraphernalia. All current drug trafficking felonies would remain felonies. The amendment would allow the reclassification to be done retroactively, so people currently in prison for possession-only offenses could be released, and people with past drug-possession felonies could get them reclassified, opening up job opportunities for thousands of Ohioans.

**2. Cut-off the probation-to-prison pipeline.** Twenty-three percent of the people coming to Ohio's prisons each year (about 4,700 annually) are being sent to prison for probation violations –not new crimes. Minor violations—such as missing a meeting with a probation officer due to a work commitment—often result in prison time for people who are working to get their lives back on track. The amendment would prohibit prison sentences as punishment for probation rule infractions that are not new crimes.

**3. Incentivize personal rehabilitation in prison.** Data and personal stories demonstrate that safety and rehabilitation improve when people receive days off of their prison terms for participating in quality programming. The amendment would expand the ability of current inmates to earn these modest sentence reductions.

**4. Invest savings in community health.** The first three reforms will safely and significantly shrink the prison population. The amendment will then redirect the savings into local treatment and

support programs for youths and adults – further improving safety and decreasing our state's reliance on prisons to solve social ills.

## VOLUNTEER FIELD PLAN

**On or before July 4, 2018 we will deliver 600,000+ signatures to the Secretary of State. On Tuesday, November 6, over 2.1 million Ohioans will vote in support of our Safe and Healthy Communities ballot initiative, powered by directly impacted people making over 1 million voter contacts.**

We are committed to a robust plan centered around volunteers and leaders. By investing in our volunteers now, we will develop strong leaders capable of protecting this victory in 2019 through local and state advocacy and action. This will require a shift in orientation about how we lead and engage volunteers and develop our staff. We will be asking volunteers to organize teams capable of collecting 1,000 signatures per team. These teams will be organized and managed by fellows and organizers.

We are breaking up the work of 2018 into 6 phases, beginning with community meetings and political education and progressing to team formation, signature collection at scale, voter registration, GOTV, and leadership assemblies to plan next steps.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL PLAN

In the early stages of this campaign, our communications strategy will focus on building our base and membership, and on activating this base to move a narrative in their communities around the need for criminal justice reform. Our communications team will work closely with our organizing and field teams to integrate a consistent, powerful narrative— informed by the experiences and expertise of member leaders –into all of our meetings, trainings, and community-based events.

We will also use the early stages of the campaign to identify and train a bench of grassroots leaders to share their stories and serve as media spokespeople when necessary. Once the campaign

goes public, Stand Up for Ohio will work closely with the campaign's pollsters, digital specialists, and media consultants to proactively frame a public narrative around the need for treatment over incarceration, to respond quickly to attacks and unforeseen developments, and to produce paid media content for TV, print, and digital platforms.

At the same time, we will use our existing large digital reach to engage our lists around local campaign peaks and the need to reform our broken

criminal justice system. We plan to use our email lists (40,000 addresses and counting) and social media channels to move audiences up the ladder of engagement and towards offline mobilization such as event turnout and volunteering. In particular, we will experiment with digital volunteer recruitment to do signature collection in geographies where SUFO members do not currently exist. Newly trained digital volunteers will provide expanded reach in support of our digital organizing and social media echo chamber.

## THIRTEEN COUNTY ELECTORAL STRATEGY

There are 13 counties in Ohio that are either urban core or contiguous counties that border the cities that hold a disproportionate amount of voters. These counties have the ability to flip the state toward progressive candidates. Ohio has its midterm elections in 2018 and those elections are critical for the control of the apportionment board that is in charge of drawing all Ohio legislative districts. Voter engagement in these counties has long term implications for all elections, including the Presidential election of 2020.

In 2018, we must increase unlikely voter turnout in order to help progressive statewide candidates win. Low income and African American voters are not apathetic to the election process, but—like anyone else—must believe an election can have a meaningful impact on their lives and on the lives of their neighbors. These communities have been asked over and over to commit to the delivery of a candidate and even a party with little to no return on their investment.

### 13 TARGET COUNTIES:

- Athens (Athens)
- Clark (Springfield)
- Cuyahoga (Cleveland)
- Greene (Beavercreek)
- Franklin (Columbus)
- Hamilton (Cincinnati)
- Lorain (Lorain)
- Lucas (Toledo)
- Mahoning (Youngstown)
- Montgomery (Dayton)
- Stark (Canton)
- Summit (Akron)
- Warren (Middletown)





# TRANSFORMING OUR BASE INTO MEMBERSHIP

## MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

For too long, the political plan for our state has been written by donors and operatives outside Ohio. Because we do not generate our own grassroots funding, we end up beholden to outside interests who do not necessarily have a stake in the future of our state and our communities. By building a membership base for Stand Up for Ohio, we will:

- Achieve financial independence. If we raise our own c4 funding from in-state, small-dollar donations, we can write and execute our own plan for our state and our communities. We will no longer need to compromise our message or agenda in order to meet someone else's deliverables.
- Become an organization of and for the people of Ohio. For the first time since its inception, Stand Up for Ohio will be truly accountable to a base of Ohioans from our communities—not to out of state funders. Members will, in turn, be actively invested and engaged in the operation and direction of SUFO.

## WHAT IS A MEMBER?

Members of SUFO are women and men across Ohio who believe in our mission and have chosen to invest in building the organization. Members sign a membership form and commit to making a financial contribution towards building a vehicle for independent political power. Members not only support, but have a stake in SUFO campaigns. Because one of our primary objectives is achieving financial independence, we are asking members to make a financial investment in the organization. This can be as little as a one-time contribution of five dollars, but the goal will be to move everyone into a recurring monthly dues system.

Our second and equally- (if not more-) important objective is to build an organization that reflects our communities, comprised of Ohioans who are directly impacted by our campaigns. For this reason, we emphasize the importance of organizing members from our base and from contacts we make in the course of our electoral work—not only from our activist networks and digital following. We know that it is easier to ask middle-class activists and supporters for money. We also know that poor people can and will invest in an organization that represents their interests.

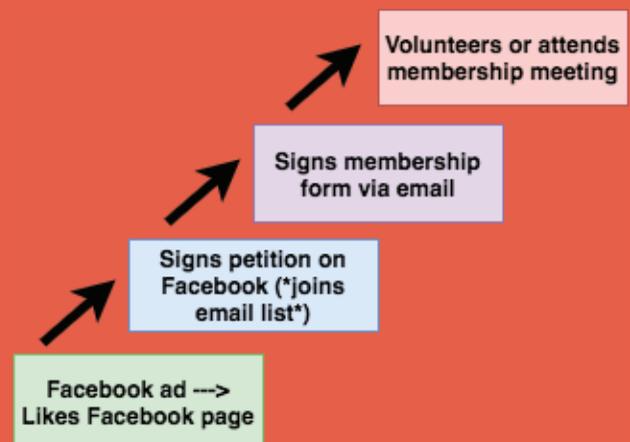
Members receive quarterly email updates about SUFO campaigns, as well as a printed annual report. Members will be invited to quarterly SUFO membership

meetings and will play a role in shaping SUFO's platform and political agenda. Members will serve as the public face of SUFO, acting as media spokespeople, signing off on emails to the wider list, and sharing their stories in online and printed materials.

## STRATEGY OVERVIEW

We believe that the fact that we are running an ambitious statewide ballot initiative in 2018 will make a campaign for membership easier and more successful than a membership drive by itself. Stand Up For Ohio has an established brand and a track record of winning campaigns and delivering electoral results. We believe that an ask to join our organization, coupled with an ask to support an inspiring statewide ballot initiative to address mass incarceration will be an exciting proposition.

We will start by making the ask of our supporters who are already on our email list and who follow us on Facebook. Once we make this ask, we will implement a digital ladder of engagement to connect with more supporters and move them into membership.



A digital strategy alone will not get us to scale or build a membership that reflects our communities. In order to raise enough money to achieve financial independence and build a representative membership base, we must employ both traditional and digital organizing strategies. After the initial digital launch, we will begin integrating membership asks into our petition collection program, experimenting with different models adapted from community organizations that have successfully run membership canvasses. Additionally, we will hold two annual membership drives, which will include digital and email campaigns, phone banks, and community events.



Ohio Organizing Campaign / Stand Up for Ohio

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