

## DRAFT MINUTES

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS Meeting Jointly

Wednesday, October 20, 2014

The Senate and House Committees on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs met jointly on Wednesday, October 20, 2014, at 12:00 p.m. at the Arkansas Correctional School in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

#### **Members in Attendance**

The following committee members attended: Senators Eddie Joe Williams, Chair; and Bobby Pierce. Representatives Andrea Lea, Chair; Duncan Baird, Bob Ballinger, Nate Bell, Debra Hobbs, and Jim Nickels.

Other legislators in attendance were: Senators Joyce Elliott and Stephanie Flowers.

The meeting was called to order by Senator Williams.

#### **LaSalle Corrections**

**Mr. Billy McConnell, Managing Director, LaSalle Corrections**, presented the history of LaSalle Corrections. The company started in 1997 providing corrections industry solutions and services to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. Their services include facility design and development, financing, construction, security, operations management, and inmate programs. Inmate programs and services offered by LaSalle facilities include outside recreation, telephone communications, commissary services, continuing education, rehabilitative programs, and vocational skills. Some of the programs include accountability planning, cognitive behavior therapy, family reunification, victim awareness, workforce development, and faith based programs.

#### **Smarter Sentencing Program [Exhibit C]**

**The Honorable Robin Carroll, Judge, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Division 4**, presented the Smarter Sentencing Program (SSP) otherwise known as Alternative Sentencing Program implemented in January 1, 2011. The goal is to reduce recidivism by 25% and the program has shown significant results. The recidivism rate was 2.7% through the first 18 months of the program. There have been 477 graduates out of 531 participants and 43% reduction in criminogenic risk upon re-testing. In 2012 there was a 49% employment rate upon entering SSP and a 76% employment rate for participants after six months. Also, there has been a 23% increase in adult education (GED), work force certificates, and career readiness certificates. For 2013 the recidivism rate was 3.8% recidivism rate, saved millions in correctional costs, and felony filings decrease by 25% district-wide and 37% in Union County.

#### **Discussion of Bed Availability at County Jails [Exhibit D]**

**Mr. Ronnie Baldwin, Executive Director, Arkansas Sheriff's Association**, stated the Arkansas Sheriff's Association conducted a survey on the availability of beds in the county jails. Thirty-one counties responded to the survey, with a total of 697 beds that could become available if the current county jail backlogs were cleared. One county responded they could have 50 beds available at the cost of \$50.00 daily per bed and another county could have 28 beds available at the cost of \$45.00 daily per bed.

### **Presentation of Building Space and Capacity Report for Correctional Facilities [Exhibit E]**

**Mr. Ray Hobbs, Director, Arkansas Department of Correction (ADC)**, discussed bed capacity for FY 2015. He stated there are 17,732 inmates under ADC jurisdiction, but only operating 15,471 beds. The remaining 2,673 are non-agency beds including county jail back-up, 309-contract beds throughout the county jails, and the interstate compact inmates. Mr. Hobbs discussed the original design capacity of all ADC facilities can house 14,315 inmates. ADC made some design changes that opened an additional 276 beds, 676 temporary beds and 39 temporary jail beds resulting in a total capacity of 15,306. He stated they will request approval from the Board of Corrections to open up 165 temporary beds which will bring the total to 15,471.

Senator Williams asked for information regarding staffing for each ADC facility to be presented on the next meeting.

### **Discussion of Transitional Beds and Additional Parole Officers**

**Ms. Sheila Sharp, Director, Arkansas Community Correction**, stated the Arkansas Community Correction has been working on a comprehensive reentry plan for Arkansas with the focus on reducing recidivism and she requested to present the report at the next State Agencies Committee meeting. One recommendation in the comprehensive plan is to establish transitional reentry centers around the state. The budget proposal to operate a transitional bed is approximately \$30.00 daily per bed. Currently, there are around 1,800 transitional living beds in Arkansas.

Ms. Sharp presented a summary for the parole and probation officer caseload. As of October 13, 2014, there are 405 parole and probation officers and 53,231 offenders, an average caseload of 130 per officer. The recommended national average caseload per officer according to the American Probation and Parole Association is 30 for high risk, 60 medium risk, and 120 low risk offenders. ACC is requesting 212 additional parole and probation officers.

Senator Elliott suggested a joint meeting between State Agencies and Judiciary Committees to discuss the prison overcrowding issue and for ACC to present the Act 1190 report.

### **Presentation of Reentry Program Study and a Summary of the Missouri Reentry Process [Exhibits G.1, G.2, and G.3]**

**Dr. Brent Benda, Senior Legislative Analyst, Bureau of Legislative Research**, discussed a recidivism study released by the Arkansas Department of Correction that indicated 43.2% of offenders released in 2010 were re-incarcerated within three years. Over the three year follow up period, recidivism rate increased from 9.2% to 43.2% during the first six months. Offenders released on parole had a recidivism rate of 43.8 % while those who had completed their sentence were at 22.5% during the three year period. The most effective reentry programs that can reduce recidivism rates are those that combine job training and employment, counseling and housing assistance. Additionally, community services including substance abuse and mental health treatment, family services, and spiritual counseling can further reduce recidivism. He also discussed the differences between the Earn Your Release Program and the Pathway to Freedom Initiative.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.