

REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE OVERSIGHT TASK FORCE

APRIL 30, 2015

The Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force met at 10:00 a.m., on Thursday, April 30, 2015, in Room B-MAC, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Task Force members present: Senator Jeremy Hutchinson; Representatives Matthew Shepherd and Dwight Tosh; Drew Baker, Cristi Beaumont, Kenton Buckner, Tjuana Byrd, Ken Cassidy, John Felts, John Wesley Hall, Tim Helder, Wendy Kelley, Benny Magness, Steve Newsome, Robin Raveendran, and Sheila Sharp.

Non-member legislators present: Senator Jonathan Dismang; Representatives Charlotte Vining Douglas, Kenneth Ferguson, David Fielding, Sheilla Lampkin, and Betty Overbey.

Senator Hutchinson called the meeting to order and asked that members introduce themselves and the agency/organization they represent.

Senator Hutchinson and Representative Shepherd provided an overview of Act 895 of 2015, which created the Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force. The task force is charged with studying the performance and outcome measures related to Act 895 and will meet at least quarterly at the call of the co-chairs or a majority of the members. The task force must prepare an annual report that includes recommendations for improvements and a summary of savings generated and the impact on public safety as the result of this act.

Sheila Sharp, Director, Arkansas Community Correction, presented an overview of Act 1190. (**Handout 1**)

Action/Requests

Upon motion by Cristi Beaumont, and seconded by Benny Magness, the Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force Rules of Procedure were adopted.

Upon motion by John Felts, and seconded by Ken Cassidy, Senator Hutchinson and Representative Shepherd were elected co-chairs of the task force.

Senator Hutchinson stated that he would like future actions and topics of discussions to include:

- engaging stakeholders to come to a consensus for a comprehensive public safety and accountability plan
- identify factors driving prison growth which includes ensuring uniform data collection statewide
- establish performance measures that hold all criminal justice system entities accountable
- identify and enhance community-based sentencing options for courts to use to sentence/sanction non-violent offenders allowing them to remain in the community but holding them accountable
- identify additional reentry initiatives – beyond Act 1190
- re-evaluate the Sentencing Grid in terms of ensuring uniformity
- make recommendations that balance the needs of victims for justice versus the cost of housing non-violent offenders in prison; focus resources on medium and high-risk (of reoffending) offenders
- evaluate county jail backup issues – who needs to be held in county jails; by law or policy; bond issues
- engaging communities to participate in community-based alternatives for probation, non-violent offenders as well as in reentry programs; expanding treatment options for those with mental health and substance abuse disorders in lieu of sentencing to prison

Senator Hutchinson requested the following representatives review availability of statewide coverage and report back to the task force at a later date: Liz Hubbard, QualChoice; Max Greenwood, Blue Cross Blue Shield; and John Ryan, Ambetter of Arkansas.

The next task force meeting is scheduled for May 27, 2015, at 1:00 p.m. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.