



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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2017

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #236

Prison Mentorship Pilot Program (Corrections -- Adult Corrections)

[LFB 2017-19 Budget Summary: Page 142, #12]

GOVERNOR

No provision.

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Provide \$252,400 in 2017-18 and \$303,000 in 2018-19 and 5.0 positions annually for a mentorship pilot program between inmates and citizen volunteers. Positions would include 1.0 corrections program supervisor, 1.0 corrections program associate, and 3.0 volunteer coordinators.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The bill would provide funding and positions for a prison mentorship pilot program to be operated at the Oakhill Correctional Institution. According to the Department:

"To improve their ability to develop soft skills and build a network of support, DOC would facilitate mentoring relationships between non-DOC volunteers and inmates 6-12 months from release. These mentors would meet with offenders prior to release and continue to meet with them after the offenders leave prison for another 12 months...[assisting] offenders with their specific needs regarding employment, housing, families, treatment, mental health needs, and cognitive pro-social skills. Staff would be responsible for providing initial and continued training to mentors on how to help offenders and ensure appropriate boundaries with offenders. Staff members would also be responsible for ensuring meetings between mentors and offenders, assisting mentors and offenders with any issues, communicating with prison staff or parole officer, and tracking outcomes of the program."

2. The Department indicates that the size of the program will depend on the number of mentor volunteers and participating inmates, and the individual needs of inmates in the program. Approximately 300 inmates are released from Oakhill Correctional Institution each year.

3. Various volunteer programs currently operate in the state prisons, including Alcoholics Anonymous, education, recreation, religious, and gardening programs. The Department argues that additional staffing is necessary to support the mentorship volunteer program in order to train, monitor and assist volunteers in their work: "The prison mentorship volunteer program will be more intensive than other volunteer work (in regards to more inmate interaction) and will require more training of volunteers in how to best mentor the inmates with their issues. Based on the additional training for the volunteers and the more intensive work, it will require more staff time than other volunteer programs. This additional workload cannot be completed by the current staff in addition to their normal duties."

4. Funding for the mentorship program would be provided on an ongoing basis under the Department's general program operations appropriation. Although a pilot program, the Department argues funding should be ongoing because "one-time funding of two years would not allow the DOC to reasonably evaluate the effectiveness of the program," and if the positions were one-time project positions, the positions may be harder to fill. To support this initiative, the Committee may wish to approve the provision. [Alternative 1]

5. While deliberating on the state's overall budgetary priorities and concerns and the fact the program is a pilot project, the Committee may wish to support the provision, but at a lower funding and position level. As such, the Committee could provide half the staffing and funding for the program (\$130,100 GPR in 2017-18 and \$155,300 GPR in 2018-19 and 2.5 GPR positions annually). [Alternative 2]

6. The program is designed to provide a mentorship relationship between volunteers and inmates prior to the inmate's release, then continue for 12 months post-release. The Department currently administers the Becky Young program (\$10,138,400 GPR annually) which supports community services with goals of increasing public safety, reducing the risk that offenders on community supervision will reoffend, and reducing recidivism rates. Programming includes utilization of risk assessments, Windows to Work, Computer Numerical Control mobile lab, Community Corrections Employment Program, cognitive behavioral programs, Opening Avenues to Reentry Success, Disabled Offenders Economic Security project, evidence-based training with the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute, community residential programs, Circles of Support, alcohol and other drug relapse programs, county jail recidivism reduction programs, and the Transitional Outreach Program.

7. As the mentorship program would relate to supporting the reentry of offenders into the community, it could be argued that funding and staffing would be better appropriated under Corrections' Becky Young community corrections appropriation. Under the bill, if the mentorship program were to end and since funding is in the Department's general program operations appropriation, funding could be utilized for any activity in the \$750 million GPR appropriation. To the extent that the volunteer mentorship program would be determined ineffective, if funding were appropriated under the Becky Young appropriation, funding could continue to be utilized to support

other reentry services under the appropriation. [Alternative 3]

8. Since the mentorship program is a pilot, but funding and staffing is ongoing, the Committee may wish to direct Corrections to submit a report to the Committee by January 1, 2019, evaluating the effectiveness of the program for continued funding, including information on: (a) the number of volunteer mentors and participating offenders; (b) how many inmates were released under the program and the county of release; and (c) the recidivism rate of participating inmates. Depending on the submitted evaluation, the Committee could decide, under the 2019-21 budget, to delete the funding, retain funding for other reentry uses, or continue funding, potentially codifying the program with other statutorily-required community services supported by the Becky Young appropriation. [Alternative 4]

9. Alternatively, the Committee may wish to delete the provision. Mentorship programs were not an issue identified by Corrections in its 2017-19 budget request. Further, given the Department's prior experience with volunteers, it could be argued that the Department could start-up and operate a volunteer program within any of its facilities. [Alternative 5]

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$252,400 in 2017-18 and \$303,000 in 2018-19 and 5.0 positions annually for a mentorship pilot program between inmates and citizen volunteers.

ALT 1	Change to Base		Change to Bill	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPS	\$555,400	5.00	\$0	0.00

2. Modify the Governor's recommendation to provide \$130,100 GPR in 2017-18 and \$155,300 GPR in 2018-19 and 2.5 GPR positions annually for a mentorship pilot program between inmates and citizen volunteers.

ALT 2	Change to Base		Change to Bill	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPS	\$285,400	2.50	- \$270,000	- 2.50

3. In addition to Alternatives 1 or 2, modify the bill to provide that the allocated funding and staffing be appropriated under the Becky Young community corrections appropriation, rather than the general program operations appropriation.

4. In addition to any of the above alternatives, direct the Department to submit a report to the Committee by January 1, 2019, evaluating the effectiveness of the program, including information on: (a) the number of volunteer mentors and participating offenders; (b) how many

inmates were released under the program and the county of release; and (c) the recidivism rate of participating inmates.

5. Delete provision.

ALT 5	Change to Base		Change to Bill	
	Funding	Positions	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$0	0.00	- \$555,400	- 5.00

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