



Commonwealth of Kentucky Justice & Public Safety Cabinet

Matthew G. Bevin, Governor

John C. Tilley, Secretary

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Expert panel recommends steps to control prison costs and reduce crime

Recommendations would reduce recidivism, cut future prison costs by \$340 million

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 18, 2017) – Faced with growing inmate populations, mounting taxpayer costs and troubling recidivism rates, a group of Kentucky criminal justice leaders are advancing recommendations to curb prison growth and improve public safety.

The CJPAC Justice Reinvestment Work Group today announced a comprehensive set of data-driven recommendations for the upcoming legislative session that would reduce recidivism, hold offenders accountable, and control the state's prison growth.

If adopted, the Work Group's package of recommendations is projected to eliminate the need for 3,500 additional beds, averting 79 percent of the projected growth in Kentucky's prison population over the next 10 years. That would save nearly \$340 million in corrections costs through 2027, allowing Kentucky to focus resources on the most serious public safety threats

"The recommendations released today by the Work Group are the result of months of research, deliberation, and reflection on how to strengthen public safety while bringing our corrections spending under control," said Kentucky Justice Secretary John Tilley, who serves as chairman of the Work Group. "By focusing our prison resources on the most dangerous offenders and expanding alternatives for nonviolent offenders, we can ensure taxpayers get the best return on their public safety investment."

The Work Group's recommendations would:

- Strengthen pretrial release;
- Focus prison and jail resources on serious and violent offenders;
- Strengthen community supervision;
- Minimize financial barriers to successful reentry; and
- Ensure sustainability of the criminal justice reforms.

Gov. Matt Bevin created the Work Group in September, charging the 19 members with developing solutions to curb the growth in taxpayer spending on prisons while strengthening public safety through a smarter, more deliberate supervision practices.

The Work Group engaged in a five-month study of Kentucky's sentencing and corrections systems, analyzing data, evaluating innovative policies and programs at key decision points, reviewing research on what works to reduce recidivism, and developing comprehensive and tailored recommendations.

The group represents the diverse perspectives of the criminal justice system including prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, legislators, corrections officials, crime victims and business leaders.

Admissions to Kentucky prisons increased by 32 percent from 2012 to 2016, driven by growing numbers of people sentenced for low-level, nonviolent crimes. In 2016, 65 percent of admissions were for drug and property offenses. This trend has disproportionately impacted women, with a 54 percent increase in female admissions over the last five years. The incarceration rate for women in Kentucky is nearly twice the national average and is the fifth-highest in the nation.

"We're incarcerating too many people, particularly women, for low-level offenses," said Eileen Recktenwald, executive director of the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs. "Many of these women are crime victims themselves. Accountability is important, but they need support and treatment, not a jail cell."

This unchecked growth has led to overcrowding in jails and prisons and created a financial burden for Kentucky taxpayers. The state now spends \$570.5 million dollars on corrections, a \$65 million increase since 2014.

Despite these high costs, Kentucky residents are not getting a sufficient return on their public safety investment: 41 percent of offenders return to state custody within two years of release. And worse, the prison population is projected to increase by 19 percent over the next decade, adding just over 4,400 beds, at a cost of an additional \$600 million dollars.

"From a law enforcement perspective, it doesn't benefit anyone to lock up the same individuals over and over without meaningful treatment or rehabilitation or hope to a clear path for reversing their criminal activity," said recently retired Bellevue Police Chief, Wayne Turner, who served as a committee member on the Work Group and was the 2017 Kentucky Police Chief of the Year."

"These recommendations are not about being soft on crime; they are about holding people accountable in a way that enhances public safety now and for many years to come," Chief Turner said. "Moreover, this initiative is not about just reducing jail populations but rather a holistic strategy to develop a model that refocuses current limited resources with an ultimate goal of reducing recidivism. The challenge has been to develop modern fiscally-sound, data driven criminal justice policies that protect public safety, holds offenders accountable, reduces swelling corrections populations and safely and humanely reintegrates offenders back into a productive role in the Commonwealth."

Members of the Kentucky Justice Reinvestment Work Group are:

- John Tilley (Chairman), Secretary of the Justice & Public Safety Cabinet
- Johnathan Hall, Director of Probation and Parole for the Kentucky Department of Corrections
- Jason Nemes, State Representative
- John Schickel, State Senator
- Whitney Westerfield, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee
- Joseph Fischer, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee
- Courtney Baxter, Commonwealth's Attorney
- Amy Milliken, County Attorney
- Damon Preston, Kentucky Public Advocate
- Amy Hannah, Kentucky Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Wayne Turner, former Bellevue Police Chief
- Judge Kevin Holbrook, District Court (District 24)
- Judge Patricia Summe, Circuit Court (Kenton County)
- Judge Tommy Turner, County Judge Executive
- Eileen Recktenwald, Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs
- Ashli Watts, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Daniel Cameron, Smart on Crime Coalition
- Jason Woosley, Grayson County Jailer
- Adrienne Southworth, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Lieutenant Governor

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