

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 138

BY SENATOR BROWN

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Reentry Advisory Council to identify strategies to afford offenders committed to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections who are confined in parish correctional facilities the support necessary to enhance education, job skills and training, and needed behaviors to facilitate successful reentry upon release pursuant to the Reentry Advisory Council and Offender Rehabilitation Workforce Development Act and to provide needed mental health care for all committed to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections in need of such services, whether confined to a state or parish correctional facility, all to facilitate successful reentry upon release, and to urge and request the secretary of the department to take steps to carry out such strategies.

WHEREAS, R.S. 15:1199.1 through R.S. 15:1199.16 establishes and provides for the " Reentry Advisory Council and Offender Rehabilitation Workforce Development Act"; and

WHEREAS, as stated in that Act:

(1) An essential component of reducing recidivism is providing an individual with the necessary occupational skills to afford him the opportunity to earn a living, support his family, and contribute to his community and that it is absolutely essential to provide proper substance abuse counseling, mentoring, and other programs to assist individuals as they return to their communities with a focus on breaking the cycle that prevents them from moving forward with their lives.

(2) Successful offender reentry and reintegration into the community is a matter of critical importance to the public's safety, but reentry is often unsuccessful due to the barriers ex-offenders face upon release; these barriers include but are not limited to a lack of education and job skills, employment prohibition in selected occupations, mental health, and

substance abuse problems, access to valid identification documents, child support enforcement regulations, access to public housing and other public benefits, and strained or fragile family and community ties.

(3) The ability of ex-offenders to obtain employment after incarceration and become productive members of their communities is essential to reducing recidivism rates; however, successfully finding employment is often difficult due to the reluctance of many employers to hire individuals with criminal backgrounds.

(4) Without successful reentry into the community, recidivism is likely to occur, causing detrimental effects to public safety, communities, families, taxpayers, and ex-offenders.

(5) Offender reentry is a crime prevention strategy, which serves to reduce crime and the number of crime victims and ultimately ensures opportunities for safer communities.

(6) Successful reentry is also a cost-saving measure which results in savings to state and local criminal justice systems; and

WHEREAS, many offenders committed to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections are in need of mental health services, whether confined to a state or parish correctional facility; and

WHEREAS, the Reentry Advisory Council and Offender Rehabilitation Workforce Development Act was enacted with the goal of establishing a more systematic approach to identifying obstacles that impede successful reentry and developing and implementing effective reentry strategies that improve public safety; and

WHEREAS, the legislature established the Reentry Advisory Council within the Department of Public Safety and Corrections as an advisory body to the secretary, who is tasked with the administration of the Act, and the legislature with the administration of the program as authorized by the Act; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Act, an inmate rehabilitation and workforce development program has been developed and implemented for offenders committed to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections who are confined in state correctional facilities; and

WHEREAS, as a large number of offenders that are committed to the Department

of Public Safety and Corrections are confined in parish correctional facilities, it is essential to develop strategies, make recommendations, and implement the support necessary to enhance education, job skills and training, and needed behaviors, to facilitate successful reentry upon release.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Reentry Advisory Council to identify strategies to afford offenders committed to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections that are confined in parish correctional facilities the support necessary to enhance education, job skills and training, and needed behaviors and to provide needed mental health care for all committed to the department in need of such services, whether confined to a state or parish correctional facility, all to facilitate successful reentry upon release.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, pursuant to strategies identified by the Reentry Advisory Council, to take necessary steps to extend the inmate rehabilitation and workforce development program to offenders committed to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections that are confined in parish correctional facilities pursuant to the Reentry Advisory Council and Offender Rehabilitation Workforce Development Act and to provide needed mental health care for all committed to the department in need of such services, whether confined to a state or parish correctional facility.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, with the assistance of the Reentry Advisory Council, shall include in the annual report on or before March first of each year to the House Committee on the Administration of Criminal Justice and the Senate Committee on Judiciary B required pursuant to R.S. 15:1199.5(F) all actions taken to provide support necessary to enhance education, job skills and training, and needed behaviors to facilitate successful reentry upon release to afford offenders committed to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections that are confined in parish correctional facilities and all actions taken to provide needed mental health care for all committed to the department in need of such services, whether confined to a state or parish correctional facility.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the Reentry Advisory Council.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES