

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1330
Judiciary

(Delegate Swain)

Task Force to Reduce Incarceration in Maryland

This bill establishes a Task Force to Reduce Incarceration in Maryland. The task force must study and make recommendations to address the challenges of excessive criminalizing of nonviolent offenses and incarceration of nonviolent offenders. The task force is required to meet at least once per month and hold at least two public meetings.

The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) must provide staff for the task force, which must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2014.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2014, and terminates June 30, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for GOCCP are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force is required to address specified matters relating to (1) decriminalization of drug possession offenses; (2) alternate substance abuse control strategies to reduce taxpayer costs and help juvenile offenders; (3) how statewide implementation of certain evidence-based programs could be coordinated with local

courts and corrections programs for specified purposes; (4) how Maryland's prisons and detention centers could be improved by taking certain actions; and (5) specified statewide employment initiatives to assist residents to successfully complete corrections programs.

Task force members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations.

Background: According to the Center on Sentencing and Corrections at the Vera Institute of Justice, nationally, over the past 20 years, the prison population in the United States has almost tripled. Nearly 1 in 100 adults in the country are estimated to have been in jail or prison. Some of these individuals are violent, high-risk, offenders. However, many are nonviolent offenders considered to be low-risk offenders. Once released, it is estimated that about half of all prisoners are incarcerated again within three years, either for a new offense or for violating the conditions of release. Vera believes that this high reliance on incarceration brings with it substantial fiscal and social consequences, including large correctional budgets and weakened communities. Vera and the Pew Research Center are currently engaged in some projects to research and identify inefficient and ineffective state and federal policies and identify alternative approaches. Vera provides technical assistance to the states to examine these findings and engage in problem solving.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 722 (Senator Benson, *et al.*) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, Vera Institute of Justice, Pew Research Center, Department of Legislative Services

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