

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESTORATION AND REFORM

2021 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Keven J. Stratton

Senate Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This resolution highlights issues related to cost and effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ affirms the important role the criminal justice system plays in keeping our families and communities safe;
- ▶ highlights certain harms done by inefficiencies in the criminal justice system; and
- ▶ commits to seeking out and implementing criminal justice policies that cut costs while obtaining better outcomes, including eliminating excessive government regulation where inadvertent noncompliance has been deemed a criminal offense.

Special Clauses:

None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah, the Governor concurring therein:

WHEREAS, the purpose of the criminal justice system is to make our communities safer while securing liberty and justice for all in a cost-effective manner;

WHEREAS, a report from the Prison Policy Initiative indicates Utah state prisons and jails currently incarcerate approximately 14,000 people;



28 WHEREAS, a report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation published in 2016 estimated
29 that from 2011-2012, 44,000 children in the state of Utah had an absent parent due to
30 incarceration;

31 WHEREAS, the same report notes that having an incarcerated parent contributes
32 significantly to economic instability for the family, and in many instances, has led to a
33 significant increase in child homelessness;

34 WHEREAS, corrections expenditures are the second fastest growing budget item for
35 states, with over \$1.3 billion in taxpayer dollars spent in 2010 on Utah's criminal justice
36 system;

37 WHEREAS, lengthy prison terms increase recidivism rates for low-level offenders,
38 with more than half of state offenders returning to prison within three years;

39 WHEREAS, many former offenders often face difficulties seeking gainful employment
40 due to legal restrictions on those with a criminal history, including occupational licensing laws,
41 which leads to increased recidivism rates;

42 WHEREAS, any government program with a failure rate this high would justifiably
43 prompt serious reconsideration to determine potential efficiencies and areas for reform;

44 WHEREAS, conservative states, such as Utah, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Kansas,
45 Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, and South Dakota have adopted policies
46 that have been proven to safely reduce incarceration rates, save billions in taxpayer dollars,
47 significantly cut crime rates, and make our communities safer by reducing recidivism and
48 allowing law enforcement to focus on serious and violent offenders; and

49 WHEREAS, these policies increase personal responsibility, remove government
50 obstacles to putting ex-offenders back to work, and use proven and effective faith-based,
51 educational, and rehabilitative programs which allow these individuals to pursue productive,
52 crime-free lives:

53 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah, the
54 Governor concurring therein, supports effective criminal justice reforms for nonviolent
55 offenders at the state and federal level that protect our communities, respect crime victims,
56 restore families, safely reduce prison populations, decrease the size and scope of government
57 overreach and spending, and increase transparency and accountability.

58 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature, the Governor concurring therein,

59 supports efforts to coordinate with families and faith-based communities, provide substance
60 abuse treatment to addicts, emphasize work and education, remove unnecessary barriers that
61 limit a formerly incarcerated individual from gaining employment and housing, and implement
62 policies that cut costs while obtaining better outcomes.

63 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature, the Governor concurring therein,
64 will work to eliminate excessive government regulation where inadvertent noncompliance has
65 been deemed a criminal offense.