
**Community Safety, Justice, & Reentry
Committee**

HB 2169

Brief Description: Concerning a pilot program creating a healthier environment for correctional officers, department of corrections staff, and individuals within a correctional facility.

Sponsors: Representatives Mosbrucker, Goodman, Leavitt, Simmons, Ormsby, Graham, Callan, Rule, Cheney and Davis.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish a four-year pilot program at the Washington State Penitentiary East Complex with the goals of improved communication between correctional officers, DOC staff, and incarcerated individuals and reducing recidivism.
- Requires the DOC to select contact officers, train correctional officers on dynamic security tactics, and initiate appropriate improvement efforts as part of the pilot program.

Hearing Date: 1/22/24

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

Background:

Department of Corrections.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) operates and manages 11 adult correctional facilities across the state. There are nine facilities serving males and two facilities serving females. As of December 2023, 13,614 individuals are incarcerated in the DOC correctional facilities.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Washington State Penitentiary (WSP) East Complex currently houses over 550 minimum custody incarcerated individuals who are within six years from release. The WSP East Complex is the only minimum custody facility in Washington State with an onsite pill line.

Washington Way.

According to the National Institute of Justice, the research, development, and evaluation agency of the United States Department of Justice, research has shown that correctional officers experience high stress levels, burnout, and a variety of other mental health related consequences as a result of their jobs.

The Washington Way program is a partnership between the DOC and the Amend program at the University of California San Francisco to bring a health-focused approach to transforming the culture within Washington's correctional facilities and reentry centers. The Amend program's primary partner is the Norwegian Correctional Service.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Corrections (DOC) must establish a four-year pilot program at the Washington State Penitentiary East Complex with the goals of improved communication between correctional officers, DOC staff, and incarcerated individuals and reducing recidivism. The DOC must select contact officers to act as mentors and coaches to incarcerated individuals. The DOC must train correctional officers in the pilot program on dynamic security tactics, which must improve the relationship between incarcerated individuals and correctional staff. Certain officers may also receive specialized competency-based, programmatic training in crisis de-escalation.

The DOC must initiate appropriate improvement efforts so that the work environment for corrections officers, including staff decompression rooms, and life while incarcerated, resembles life in the community to the highest extent possible. Such efforts may include painting and planting programs.

The Secretary of the DOC must adopt any rules and policies necessary to implement the requirements of the pilot program.

By December 1 each year, the DOC must report to the Governor and the Legislature on:

- the number of correctional officers, DOC staff, and incarcerated individuals participating in the pilot program and a summary of improvement projects undertaken;
- any effects on behaviors and participation by correctional officers, DOC staff, and incarcerated individuals;
- differential outcomes for those participating in the pilot program compared with those not participating in the pilot program; and
- recidivism outcomes for those individuals that participated in the pilot program while incarcerated, including arrests, charges, and convictions.

The act expires on June 30, 2030.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 2024.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.