

2018 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 27

BY REPRESENTATIVES SMITH AND MARCELLE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the creation of the Louisiana Women's Incarceration Task Force under the jurisdiction of the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus and the Department of Public Safety and Corrections; to provide for the membership, powers, and duties of the task force; and to require the task force to report its findings.

WHEREAS, over the last several years, Louisiana has taken steps to implement cost-effective, evidence-based practices and programs that have worked to control the growth in the state's prison population; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana should build upon the success of the justice reinvestment task force while recognizing that incarcerated women face unique challenges and therefore may or may not benefit from reforms that were developed without a gendered analysis and all incarcerated women could benefit from the conducting of a gendered analysis; and

WHEREAS, according to United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, Louisiana has the seventh highest women's incarceration rate in the United States and currently incarcerates more than two thousand women. Louisiana spent over \$50 million on the incarceration of women in 2017, and 62% of incarcerated women are the primary caretaker of a child under the age of eighteen; and

WHEREAS, the most effective changes will be made when all those impacted or involved in the criminal justice system have representation in developing policies and processes related to women's incarceration, and input from all criminal justice stakeholders is essential in the development and implementation of cost-effective changes; and

WHEREAS, it is beneficial to the entire population of the state of Louisiana to develop a broadly diverse and cross disciplinary task force to study state sentencing and correction systems for women with the goal of producing a body of research resulting in

making specific policy recommendations to reduce correctional populations, implement placement and behavioral practices which address and reduce violence and harassment based upon gender, and hold all parties in the correctional system responsible for their actions; and

WHEREAS, it is also beneficial to create a task force to prioritize reinvestment into successful strategies that reduce recidivism and increase both public health and safety; and

WHEREAS, the Sentencing Commission is limited to providing recommendations relating to sentencing and post-conviction relief and is therefore unable to complete a comprehensive assessment of corrections administration, offender supervision, alternatives to incarceration, and sentencing structure specifically as they apply to women.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the creation of the Louisiana Women's and Incarceration Task Force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force is hereby urged and requested to study, evaluate, analyze, and undertake a comprehensive review of the state's criminal justice system as it relates to women. The information gathered shall be used to develop policy recommendations for the legislature to:

(1) Develop practices and processes that avoid placing additional trauma or harm upon women as they navigate the criminal justice system.

(2) Reduce both the correctional population and recidivism of women.

(3) Address the holistic health of women to include access to hormone therapy, prenatal care, reproductive health, access to other medicine to maintain health, consistent health screenings, mental health access, and access to substance use and recovery resources.

(4) Increase and evaluate programming available to women during and after incarceration with the intention of self-determined development.

(5) Increase and ensure the availability of gender responsive resources to support the dignity and quality of life of all women.

(6) Reinvest savings into strategies shown to decrease recidivism, including improved reentry outcomes, diversion programs, and employment opportunities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be bipartisan and shall be composed of the following at-large members:

(1) Four representatives of criminal justice agencies designated by the governor.

(2) Four community members with significant and relevant experience or expertise designated by the governor.

(3) One member of the House of Representatives appointed by the speaker of the House.

(4) One member of the Senate appointed by the president of the Senate.

(5) One member who is a representative of a faith-based community appointed by Catholic Charities.

The chair of the task force shall be the secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, or his designee. All other officers, if any, shall be elected by and from the membership of the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the membership of the task force shall constitute a quorum and shall meet at predetermined and agreed upon dates by the task force, enforced by the chairman, or upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the task force members. All members must be notified in writing of all meetings at least two weeks before the date on which a meeting of the task force is scheduled.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus and the Department of Public Safety and Corrections shall provide the administrative assistance and staffing as may be necessary in order to enable the task force to accomplish its goals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study shall be conducted in collaboration with Operation Restoration and other community organizations and stakeholders.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may request the Louisiana Legislative Women's Caucus, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, and the office of the judicial administrator of the Louisiana Supreme Court to provide relevant data and staff expertise upon request.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall meet no less than six times per year beginning August 1, 2018, and ending by August 1, 2019, with the option of extending.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall prepare and submit a final report that contains a detailed statement of the findings and policy recommendations of the task force to the governor, leadership of the Louisiana Legislature, and the chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. The report shall be made available to the public.

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

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE