

2023 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 174

BY REPRESENTATIVES FREEMAN, WILFORD CARTER, FISHER, GOUDEAU,  
GREEN, JEFFERSON, JENKINS, KNOX, LAFLEUR, LANDRY, LARVADAIN,  
MARCELLE, NEWELL, SELDERS, AND THOMPSON

A RESOLUTION

To create a task force to study both the academic and vocational educational programs within prisons and jails in Louisiana.

WHEREAS, on June 30, 2022, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections held approximately twenty-five thousand six hundred seventy-seven individuals in its custody, in addition to one thousand three hundred ninety-five women; and

WHEREAS, approximately fourteen thousand one hundred fifty-seven individuals are housed in parish jails; and

WHEREAS, six percent of incarcerated individuals are in transitional work programs; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, there were twelve thousand, one hundred ninety-one new admissions to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, of which thirteen percent were under twenty-five years of age, twelve percent were over fifty years of age, ten percent were women, and twenty-one percent were for violent crimes; and

WHEREAS, of these new admissions, sixty-five percent were parole eligible and ninety-one percent were eligible for good time parole supervision; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, fifty-two parishes sentenced at least fifty individuals to prison, thirty-three parishes sentenced at least one hundred individuals to prison, and sixteen parishes sentenced at least two hundred individuals to prison; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, the nine leading parishes relative to sentencing are Caddo Parish with one thousand one hundred six, Jefferson Parish with nine hundred thirty-six, St. Tammany with six hundred sixty-nine, Calcasieu with sixty hundred twenty, East Baton Rouge with five hundred ninety-nine, Bossier and Ouachita with five hundred twelve, Livingston with four hundred eighty-six, and Orleans with four hundred sixty-one; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, there were twelve thousand five hundred seventy-two individuals released from state custody; and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of those individuals return to where they consider to be home or where they have opportunity and support; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, forty-nine parishes received over fifty individuals from custody, thirty-three parishes received at least one hundred individuals, sixteen parishes received over two hundred individuals; and

WHEREAS, of those sixteen parishes, Orleans received nine hundred eighty-three individuals, Caddo received nine hundred eighty-one individuals, Jefferson received nine hundred forty-seven individuals, East Baton Rouge received seven hundred forty-nine individuals, St. Tammany received six hundred sixty-six individuals, and Ouachita received five hundred twelve individuals; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana recidivism rates, including revocations of supervision, vary based on from where an individual was released, with the highest rates of return to custody being from parish jails at thirty-two percent, transitional work programs at twenty-eight percent, and state prisons at twenty-five percent over three years; and

WHEREAS, this disparity in recidivism rates has remained consistent across years of release, and the reduced rate for those who have obtained an education has reached sixteen percent; and

WHEREAS, individuals listed under "education" by the department as having attained a credential account for less than ten percent of those released between 2007 and 2020; and

WHEREAS, the recidivism rate of these individuals has steadily improved over time between 2007 and 2012, averaging an eleven percent return to prison in the first year and a reduction to five percent between the years of 2019 and 2020; and

WHEREAS, the MacKinac Center for Public Policy performed a comprehensive analysis of correctional education between the years of 1980 and 2022 and documented the impacts of various levels of education, including adult basic education reducing recidivism by six point three percent over three years, and increasing employment by one point four percent; and

WHEREAS, a completed secondary education, including a GED, reduces recidivism by seven point one percent and increases employment by one point two percent over three years; and

WHEREAS, vocational education reduces recidivism by nine point three percent and increases employment by five point five percent over three years; and

WHEREAS, a college education reduces recidivism by twenty-seven point seven percent and increases employment by ten point five percent over three years; and

WHEREAS, the RAND Corporation published a study in 2013 that showed every one dollar spent on correctional education saved the public four to five dollars in police, court, and correctional costs, in addition to saving the hardships inflicted through crime; and

WHEREAS, educated individuals in jails and prisons create a ripple effect of role models and mentors, which reduces disciplinary infractions and provides a more capable incarcerated workforce; and

WHEREAS, on average, half of incarcerated individuals have two school-aged children, who have a higher risk of incarceration due to poverty, trauma, and family disruption; and

WHEREAS, parents and children who have studied together, despite physical distance, have reported feelings of mutual inspiration from one another; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Education has reinstated the Pell Grant program for incarcerated students, increasing the viability of post-secondary education; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections created an advisory committee to implement a Pell Grant program; and

WHEREAS, incarcerated individuals participate in a wide range of programming that varies between institutions, including support from outside volunteers, temporary arrangements, and distance learning courses; and

WHEREAS, the 2022-2023 budget for the Department of Public Safety and Corrections allocates one percent of the budget, five point eighty-six million dollars, for rehabilitation, including forty-three staff education positions out of four thousand four hundred eighty-seven employees, which is an average of five individuals per institution; and

WHEREAS, it is unclear how many educational staff exist across the many local jails in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the Justice Reinvestment Initiative provided a reallocation of funds into rehabilitative programming; and

WHEREAS, those funds have been reduced and been the subject of dispute; and

WHEREAS, five percent of the incarcerated population are women, who are spread throughout multiple facilities in much less concentration than men with a different range of programming opportunities; and

WHEREAS, good time credits are granted upon completion of certain educational programming, so that prison time can be converted into parole time; and

WHEREAS, the Voice of the Experienced and Daughters Beyond Incarceration are two organizations with deep connections with Louisiana's incarcerated individuals that are committed to their rehabilitation and restoration of families; and

WHEREAS, Tulane University and Loyola University New Orleans both offer bachelor degree programs in Louisiana prisons and Northshore Technical College provides associate degree programs in Louisiana prisons.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request a commission be convened to study the landscape and efficacy of correctional educational programming in Louisiana jails and prisons.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be composed of the following members:

(1) One representative from the Department of Public Safety and Corrections with experience in educational programming, designated by the secretary of Department of Public Safety and Corrections.

(2) The executive director of the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, or his designee.

(3) Two formerly incarcerated individuals who pursued or completed a post-secondary education while incarcerated, designated by the speaker of the House of Representatives after consulting with the stakeholders.

(4) Two formerly incarcerated individuals who earned a GED while incarcerated, designated by the speaker of the House of Representatives after consulting with the stakeholders.

(5) Two individuals with experience providing education in corrections within the past five years, designated by the speaker of the House of Representatives after consulting with the stakeholders.

(6) One member of the Louisiana Board of Regents, designated by the chairman of the Board of Regents.

(7) One member of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, designated by the secretary of the Workforce Commission.

(8) One representative from the governor's office, designated by the governor.

(9) One representative from Daughters Beyond Incarceration, designated by the executive director of the organization.

(10) One representative of Voice of the Experienced, designated by the executive director.

(11) One representative from Tulane University, designated by the president of Tulane University.

(12) One representative from Loyola University New Orleans, designated by the president of Loyola University New Orleans.

(13) One representative from the Louisiana Community and Technical Colleges, designated by the system president.

(14) One representative from Northshore Technical Community College, designated by the chancellor.

(15) One representative from Louisiana State University, designated by the president of Louisiana State University.

(16) One representative from Southern University System, designated by the president of Southern University.

(17) One representative from the Vera Institute of Justice, designated by the president of the organization.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall provide a comprehensive report to the Louisiana Legislature with all of the following information:

(1) Programmatic listings per facility, inclusive of brief descriptions of the number of individuals served, demographic data, length of program, number of individuals on a wait list, and good time earned per program completion.

(2) For GED and post-secondary programs that are graded or scored, the average scores and grade point averages of participants, including the transferability of certificates and credits to institutions beyond incarceration.

(3) The number and type of vocational and academic credentials, broken down by demographics and institution.

(4) Experience, credentials, and turnover rate of program instructors.

(5) Assessment of academic and career advice in Louisiana's jails and prisons, provided through outside programs, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, or the sheriffs.

(6) Overview of restrictions on program participation due to the type of conviction, length of sentence, place of confinement, gender disparity, or disciplinary infractions.

(7) Overview of program attrition by the type of program, reason for non-completion, demographic information, gender, and place of confinement.

(8) Post-release educational enrollment.

(9) Post-release vocational certification.

(10) Post-release employment.

(11) Any other indicators of success as determined by the commission.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Tulane University shall provide staff support to the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the representative from Tulane University shall chair the task force and shall call the first meeting no later than November 1, 2023.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to each of the task force members and the appointing entities provided in this Resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that one print copy and one electronic copy of any report produced pursuant to this Resolution shall be submitted to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library as required by R.S. 24:772 no later than March 1, 2024.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES