**ENROLLED**

Regular Session, 2011

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 29

BY REPRESENTATIVE HONORE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To authorize and request the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to evaluate the feasibility and practicality of transferring a portion of the money generated by work release programs to the Louisiana school where the offender last attended and to report its findings to the legislature prior to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, according to a recent study by the PEW Center on the States, Louisiana has the highest incarceration rate in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana continues to lag behind most of the nation in student achievement, as evidenced by a large percentage of students scoring below proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's current average school performance score is ninety-one out of two hundred, meaning that approximately thirty percent of students are performing below grade level; and

WHEREAS, only sixty-seven percent of Louisiana's high school students are graduating on time, as measured using an adjusted cohort graduation rate, a common formula for calculating states' high school graduation rates which was adopted by the governors of all fifty states in 2005 through the National Governors Association Graduation Counts Compact; and

WHEREAS, approximately sixteen thousand students drop out of school each year in Louisiana, which leads to significant, lifelong personal challenges for these youth as well as long-term economic and social challenges for the state; and

WHEREAS, numerous studies have concluded that high school dropouts are one of the nation's costliest problems; and

WHEREAS, a study recently conducted by researchers at Northeastern University that used census and other government data which tracks the employment, workplace, parenting, and criminal justice experiences of young high school dropouts, puts the collective cost to the nation over the working life of each high school dropout at two hundred ninety-two thousand dollars; and

WHEREAS, there is an increased risk of incarceration and entry into the corrections system for those students who drop out of high school; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, corrections services, is to enhance public safety through the safe and secure incarceration of offenders, effective probation and parole supervision, and proven rehabilitative strategies that successfully reintegrate offenders into society, as well as assisting individuals and communities victimized by crime; and

WHEREAS, the ability of ex-offenders to obtain employment after incarceration and become productive members of their communities is essential to reducing recidivism rates; however, successfully finding employment is often difficult due to the reluctance of many employers to hire individuals with criminal backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, offender reentry is a crime prevention strategy which serves to reduce crime and the number of crime victims and ultimately ensures opportunities for safer communities; and

WHEREAS, successful reentry is also a cost-savings measure which results in savings to state and local criminal justice systems; and

WHEREAS, work release programs are some of the most innovative and successful programs developed to provide for successful reentry into society; and

WHEREAS, work release programs benefit the offender and society by providing the offender with necessary skills and tools to reenter society successfully and providing the employer with employees who are reliable and dependable workers; and

WHEREAS, the availability of additional funding can be utilized by school systems to provide for increased student achievement, improve literacy, reduce the drop out rate, and increase graduation rates; and

WHEREAS, a portion of funds received from work release programs could be transferred to the Louisiana school where the offender last attended.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby authorize and request that the Department of Public Safety and Corrections conduct a study of the work release programs offered in this state and determine the feasibility and practicality of transferring a portion of the money generated by the work release programs to the Louisiana school that the offender last attended.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby authorize and request that the Department of Public Safety and Corrections evaluate the cost effectiveness and feasibility of transferring a portion of the money generated by work release programs to be transmitted to the Louisiana school where the offender last attended, and to report its findings to the legislature prior to the convening of the 2012 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, in conducting the study, is hereby requested to collaborate with the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the office of the attorney general, appropriate federal agencies administering work release programs, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and any other agencies or entities which the department deems appropriate.

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

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE