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**NEWS ADVISORY**

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**Justice reinvestment legislation targets violent crime, insufficient behavioral health treatment and high recidivism in Missouri**

Missouri Department of Corrections Director (MDOC) Anne Precythe announced her support for legislation that would address an uptick in violent crime, insufficient behavioral health treatment and factors contributing to Missouri’s growing prison population — while strengthening public safety and helping avert the need to build two new prisons, which is estimated to cost nearly \$500 million in the next several years.

The proposed legislation, Senate Bill 966 and House Bill 2397, is the culmination of a comprehensive, data-driven review of Missouri’s criminal justice system that began in June 2017 with the formation of the Missouri State Justice Reinvestment Task Force. Between July and December, the Task Force explored issues that are driving up Missouri’s prison population and contributing to a large number of people failing on probation and parole.

As of 2016, Missouri had the nation’s eighth-highest adult incarceration rate. The state also had the second-fastest-growing female prison population between 2010 and 2016. Missouri’s state prison population currently exceeds the capacity of its correctional facilities and is projected to continue growing, resulting in a shortage of more than 2,300 prison beds by the end of FY2021. This growth is primarily being driven by people who are revoked from supervision (probation or parole), many of whom have significant behavioral health (substance use or mental illness) needs.

“Eight months ago, we were charged with changing the way we do business as a department and with building a safer and more effective criminal justice system in Missouri. This legislation, which is based on intensive analysis of Missouri’s data and the input of people on the frontlines of the system, does just that while also making better use of state resources,” Precythe said. “I look forward to working with members of the legislature so that these bills are passed and we can continue the challenging but critical work of implementing these policies across our state.”

The legislation tackles the recent increase in violent crime by creating a grant program through the Missouri Department of Public Safety that allows funding and analytical assistance to be provided to local law enforcement agencies to help them maximize efforts to deter and respond to violent crime.

“Violent crime is an issue that impacts the entire state, from our smallest rural counties to our largest cities,” said Sen. Caleb Rowden (R – Columbia), the lawmaker who introduced Senate Bill 966 and was also a member of the State Justice Reinvestment Task Force. “Missouri’s violent crime rate rose 20 percent between 2013 and 2016, and this legislation will help law enforcement agencies create and implement strategies to deter violent crime that fit the needs of their communities.”

The legislation also creates a community behavioral health treatment program that requires MDOC and the Missouri Department of Mental Health to work together to provide comprehensive community-based treatment services for people on supervision who have serious mental illnesses and addictive disorders. Many people on supervision who are revoked to prison have untreated behavioral health needs.

“The majority of people who entered prison in Missouri in FY2016 were assessed as needing treatment for substance abuse disorders or mental illnesses. However, many areas of our state lack the necessary treatment capacity to get them the help they need after their release from prison,” said Rep. Shamed Dogan (R – Ballwin), the lawmaker who introduced House Bill 2397 and was a member of the Justice Reinvestment Task Force. “The Missouri criminal justice system is at a crossroads; this bill will protect our communities and also ensure that people are connected to necessary treatment and services so that they have the best chance at putting their lives back together and returning to being productive citizens.”

Other aspects of the proposed legislation would require MDOC to provide training for staff on gender-responsive practices and trauma-informed strategies for supervising women both in prison and on supervision to reduce recidivism rates. Additionally, the legislation calls for changes to the Missouri Crime Victim Compensation program to improve access for victims of crime and for parole release decisions to be informed by the results of a risk and needs assessment that will be conducted for each person being considered for release to parole supervision.

“This legislation provides us with tools and strategies to better protect the communities that we serve and to make more informed choices based on what we know about crime, substance use, mental illness, and other challenges faced by people in our state,” said Cape Girardeau Police Chief Wes Blair, a member of the Task Force.

“Through the intensive, wide-ranging and deliberative review of our criminal justice system, we were able to find common areas of agreement that will not only improve how our system works, but, more important, have positive impacts on the lives of our state’s residents for years to come,” said Missouri Supreme Court Judge Patricia Breckenridge, a member of the Justice Reinvestment Task Force.

Last year, Gov. Eric Greitens, Judge Breckenridge (then the Chief Justice of the Missouri Supreme Court), Senate President Pro Tempore Ron Richard and House Speaker Todd Richardson formally requested support from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) to use a justice reinvestment approach to address challenges in the state’s criminal justice system.

Under the direction of the Task Force, the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, a nonprofit organization that provides practical, nonpartisan, research-driven strategies and tools to increase public safety and strengthen communities, performed a data analysis of the state’s criminal justice system, using hundreds of thousands of individual records and traveling throughout the state to collect input from system stakeholders, including judges, law enforcement, prosecutors and public defenders, behavioral health treatment providers, and people with lived experiences.

More than 25 states have used the justice reinvestment approach to date, including Arkansas, Texas and Kansas.

#### **ABOUT THE CSG JUSTICE CENTER**

*The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels from all branches of government. It provides practical, nonpartisan advice and evidence-based, consensus-driven strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities. For more information about the Justice Center, visit [www.csgjusticecenter.org](http://www.csgjusticecenter.org).*

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