

1995 SESSION

INTRODUCED

LD1539164

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 200

Offered January 25, 1994

Requesting the Department of Corrections to study and evaluate the advisability and effectiveness of implementing a multiple-step, comprehensive prison reform program.

Patron—Copeland (By Request)

Referred to Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions

WHEREAS, prisons and jails in the Commonwealth are overcrowded and opportunities for meaningful work and educational programs are restricted either by fiscal concerns or safety considerations; and

WHEREAS, given the current climate in society with people becoming increasingly concerned about their health and safety and the demand for surer, longer punishment, this population can only increase; and

WHEREAS, rehabilitation has always been a stated goal of the corrections system, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide treatment and other programs while simultaneously meeting the institutional needs for housing and upkeep; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court has determined that the "totality of conditions" within an institution determine whether those conditions are Constitutionally acceptable, and conditions such as idleness, the population density, and finite limits to program and work opportunities compound the problem of inmate population management; and

WHEREAS, according to the 1989 Commission on Prison and Jail Overcrowding, "while it cannot be stated with certainty that educational and vocational skills translate into reduced recidivism, it is clear that limited job skills and an inability to read and write guarantee that high rates of recidivism will continue;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Corrections be requested to examine the feasibility of implementing a multiple-step, comprehensive prison reform program that combines punishment and rehabilitation. The Department shall examine, but not be limited to, a six-step program through which each prisoner must pass. Length of time spent at each level may be determined by the severity of the sentence, and demotion shall be a consideration. The steps could involve (i) intake and orientation to address basic evaluation and attitude adjustment; (ii) prison work and earned privileges; (iii) vocational training; (iv) furlough for daytime work; (v) home furlough on weekends; and (vi) supervised release. In addition, a board could be established composed of prison officials, citizens, mental health officials, and successful ex-offenders.

The Department of Corrections shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of Criminal Justice Services. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department, upon request.

The Department of Corrections shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1995 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing legislative documents.

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