

November 20, 2019 - Governor's FOCUS Committee on Criminal Justice Reform
Iowa State Capitol, Room G15, Des Moines, Iowa

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

The roll was called. All committee members were present. John Koufos appeared by phone and Lacey White appeared in person for John Koufos. A quorum of committee members was present.

Tim Lane made a motion to adopt the minutes for the November 7 and November 13 meetings. The motion was seconded by Stephan Bayens. The minutes were adopted by voice vote.

Lt. Governor Adam Gregg asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Chief Justice Mark Cady.

Lt. Governor Gregg made opening remarks. He presented the committee with six draft potential recommendations from the committee's second meeting:

- HiSET Completion
- Coordinated Delivery of Post-Secondary Education in Prison
- Post-Release Educational Pathway
- Advocate for Full Authorization of the Second Chance Pell Grants
- Increase Treatment Capacity in Prisons
- Realign CBC Staffing to Focus on Treatment Rather Than Supervision

Director Beth Townsend and Deputy Director Ryan West, Iowa Workforce Development, presented on efforts made by their agency to prepare reentering citizens for employment.

- The committee discussed identification's role in readiness for employment.
- The committee discussed how Reentry Advisors work with the prison population throughout their incarceration developing relationships and building trust and hope.
 - Incarcerated individuals are educated about job opportunities in Iowa.
- The committee discussed matching jobs with interests and access to a livable wage, so reentering citizens want to stay with the job.
- The committee discussed mandatory appointments and taking a look at the requirements for a reentering citizen.
 - The committee discussed flexibility of meeting with parole officers.
- The committee discussed engaging and educating employers through the Reentry Employer roundtables.
- The committee discussed creating a list of employers willing to hire reentering citizens.
- The committee asked about the cost of prison.
 - DOC said they would provide data.
- The committee discuss the work done by Reentry Advisors.
 - Starts with initial orientation with Reentry Advisor.

- Can include re-placement with a former employer or referral to or interview with a new employer.
- Also includes ongoing employer engagement.
- 30 day and 6 month follow up after release.

Melissa Spiegel, Director of the Motor Vehicle Division at the Iowa Department of Transportation discussed transportation challenges for reentering citizens and steps DOT is taking to assist.

- The committee discussed how written exams are proctored in the prison. Driving tests must be scheduled.
- The committee discussed how only 50% of driver's license suspensions are safety related.
- The committee discussed eliminating driver's license suspensions for court debt.
 - It was mentioned that this should be broader than just reentering citizens.
- The committee discussed a license reinstatement program working between 64 counties to consolidate debts and reinstate once payments are started.
- The committee asked about how reentering citizens are connected to county attorney payment programs upon release.
- The committee discussed the day-to-day responsibilities of a Mobility Manager in the prisons, including administrative clean up of individual's records and one on one meetings with incarcerated individuals.
- The committee discussed how critical identification documents are issued using DOC records.

Randy Van Dyke, CEO of Iowa Lakes Regional Water spoke about how his business is hiring employees right out of prison and partnering with treatment and housing providers to establish a support structure for reentering citizens

Incarcerated individual Patrick Lewis and Reentry Advisor Brian Pibal appear via Zoom from North Central Correctional Facility. Mr. Lewis discussed completing an electrician apprenticeship in prison, but being denied licensure by the state Electrical Board.

Sandra Conlin, representing Associated Builders and Contractors of Iowa, discussed the challenges contractors were having hiring individuals with criminal records because they were denied licensure by the state Electrical and Plumbing Board. Those challenges inspired Senate File 567 last year, but some challenges have persisted.

- The committee discussed balancing public safety interests and looking at the specific circumstances of the crime.

David Walker, representing the NAACP, discussed occupational licensing barriers for individuals with criminal records.

- The committee discussed the inconsistent standards of review.
- The committee discussed a "directly related" standard used by other states.

Public comments:

State Senator Claire Celsi

- Asked about data on health insurance status of reentering individuals.
 - DOC said over 90% use Medicaid
- Asked if state is relying too much on non-profits for post-release services.
- Discussed Reentry Advisors and court fines and fees as barriers to a driver's license.
- Asked about use of risk assessments.

Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence

- Discussed the need for accessible services for non-offenders too.
- Suggested no consequences for missing work for parole officer visits.
- Discussed need for housing and healthcare for reentering citizens.

The committee adjourned at 4:10 p.m.