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Budget Testimony

Senate Budget Committee
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The New Jersey State Parole Board continues to serve as the state's leading re-entry agency performing various tasks including the tracking and management of nearly 16,000 offenders, including approximately 5,200 sex offenders.

The New Jersey State Parole Board has implemented several initiatives over the last 18 months in an effort to enhance supervision abilities, increase the safety and security of our officers and reduce the number of absconders from our programs, all of which have allowed the New Jersey State Parole Board to more effectively manage our resources without increases to our budget.

In our residential programs, for example, the New Jersey State Parole Board has worked with program staff to conduct random security interventions with the enhanced use of ion scanners, K-9 patrol details and in-depth drug detection sweeps in an effort to eliminate the use of illegal drugs and contraband from our programs.

The New Jersey State Parole Board has required our contracted vendors to make significant physical security improvements including enhanced mag-locks on doors, more secure perimeter fencing and other improvements in an effort to make our programs safer.

Regarding fiscal oversight, the New Jersey State Parole Board recently had auditors review all of our programs for billing procedures and practices as well as all of our residential programs for contract compliance. Although the auditors did identify areas for improvement in terms of some billing procedures, overall very few discrepancies were identified. The performance audits that were completed reflected our residential vendors are operating in accordance with contractual requirements. Areas for improvement were also identified and incorporated into the provision of contracted residential services. In addition, performance audits have assisted agency staff during the preparation of the upcoming request for proposals for residential programs. The residential RFP is being overseen by the Department of Treasury, Division of Purchase and Property. The Office of the Comptroller has provided additional advice and support through this process.

The Division of Community Programs, through our contracted vendors both residential and the Community Resource Centers, has increased the percentage of parolees within the community program environment that are employed from 16% to 25% of the total eligible population.

This focus on employment, along with our Pilot program in conjunction with the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, (PEPP), has seen a tremendous measure of success in light of the overall employment landscape.

The New Jersey State Parole Board now has over **50** cooperative agencies that accept our parolees to perform pro-social volunteer services as a measure of restorative justice and give backs to the communities they once harmed, and as a potential benefit for employment consideration. We currently have **130** parolees engaged in volunteer activities at **51** locations and have had over **229** participate since we started the project. We have awarded **99** certificates to these participants in the hope that presentation of these *Certificates of Appreciation* when presented during any employment interview process, would result in favorable consideration.

The New Jersey State Parole Board has made significant improvements in the area of technology. We have deployed 180 laptops to officers for use in the field and more orders are planned for next year. We have also deployed dozens of new desktops for our institutional staff. We have improved the Parole Board Information System (PBIS) to now include the officer's location when signing on, greatly enhancing officer's safety and security. The New Jersey State Parole Board, with our partners at the Department of Corrections, are also in the process of securing equipment which will record all radio transmissions. The agency has purchased 120 digital radios and continues to buy replacement vehicles for the fleet. We have done all of these improvements without any increases to our budget.

The New Jersey State Parole Board continues to actively recruit new officers for placement into the Basic Criminal Investigators Academy, managed by the Division of Criminal Justice at Sea Girt. Replenishing retiring officers allows the Division of Parole to maintain operational effectiveness. Currently, two recruit classes are planned in Fiscal 14.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I welcome any questions you may have.