

Assembly/Senate Budget Testimony

Spring, 2017

Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the fiscal year 2018 budget.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections FY 2018 state budget totals \$926.9 million. This represents a net decrease of \$28.6 million from the FY 2017 budget.

The NJDOC total expenditures in FY 2016 were \$1.019 billion. In FY 2010, total expenditures were \$1.099 billion. This represents a reduction of \$80.6 million, or 7.4%.

The department projects that in FY 2017, overtime hours worked will be approximately 697,000 hours, a reduction of more than 32% from FY 2010 overtime hours of 1,037,000.

Our operational indicators remain favorable as well. Since 2010, the inmate population has dropped by nearly 22 percent – from an average of nearly 26,000 inmates in 2010 to a 2017 average just above 20,000. In that same time period, crime rates have lowered by 20 percent.

These numbers can be attributed to the policies of the Governor and the Legislature such as “ban the box,” state-funded one-stop centers, our department’s extensive re-entry and educational initiatives and our close working relationships with other law enforcement entities.

Another key factor has been the success of the Drug Court initiative, through which non-violent, low-

security offenders whose crime resulted from their addiction have been diverted from the NJDOC.

Drug Courts clearly demonstrate a commitment to the philosophy that no life is disposable and that individuals with substance use disorder issues should be treated. That commitment is why we believe the time is right to unveil substance use disorder treatment initiatives at Mid-State Correctional Facility.

In his 2016 State-of-the-State address, the Governor directed the Department of Corrections to work with the Department of Human Services to re-open Mid-State as a licensed substance use disorder facility.

I'm pleased to report that when it re-opened on April 10, Mid-State became the first licensed, clinically driven drug treatment program provided by the NJDOC. Treatment services will be provided by the

Gateway Foundation, an organization with more than 40 years of experience in substance use treatment and counseling. Licensing for the 696-bed facility is provided through the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Primarily medium custody inmates will be housed at Mid-State. Clinical assessment will determine the intensity of the drug addiction and what level of services are required. It is believed that Mid-State is appropriately sized to meet this need.

Female inmates who qualify may join a similar Substance Use Disorder program at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women.

I would like to recognize our partners in the Governor's Office, the Department of Human Services and the Department of the Treasury for their involvement in this project.

As we re-open Mid-State Correctional Facility, we prepare to close our Ancora Unit, a minimum custody unit on the grounds of the Ancora Psychiatric Hospital in Hammonton. We expect this unit to be de-populated by June 30, 2017.

Historically, inmates housed at Ancora were assigned to various work details for the hospital. Over time, however, the need for these work details diminished, and it is no longer necessary to house inmates there. There will be no employee layoffs as a result of the closure, and the approximately 250 inmates currently housed in the unit will be moved to minimum custody settings in other NJDOC facilities.

Along with the closure of the Ancora Unit, additional beds have been consolidated throughout the department in order to offset the cost of re-opening Mid-State and maintain a 97% filled rate in general population beds.

Please allow me to share with you a few of our many significant operational achievements during the past year.

Emergency exercises were conducted in correctional facilities throughout the state, with participation from the NJDOC as well as other agencies. The exercises are designed to increase the proficiency of emergency responders, foster improved communications and develop multi-agency coordination.

Additionally, an initiative to upgrade each facility's video surveillance system continues. This project will replace stand-alone analog systems with complete digitally networked IP video components.

Our Canine Unit's deployments, for both departmental and Mutual Aid details, were at an all-time high this year. Some noteworthy deployments

include the Democratic National Convention and the search for explosive devices left by an alleged terrorist bomber.

Also, in an effort to strengthen quality control over substance use testing conducted by the Residential Community Release Programs, or halfway houses, with which the NJDOC contracts, the department retested 812 of the substance use tests that were deemed as having negative results. Only two of those tests were confirmed as positive.

Lab testing for offenders has been expanded from a 3 to 10 test panel to provide for a more in-depth review of our inmates' release into the community. In the near future, selected testing cups will include the ability to test for alcohol use, as well.

In the realm of education, there were 414 High School Equivalency (HSE) diplomas issued to state-sentenced inmates – an increase of 73 from last year.

The passing rate among inmates who took the HSE exam remained steady at 80%. In addition, 53 high school diplomas were awarded in Fiscal Year 2016. Furthermore, more than 4,600 industry-based vocational certificates were awarded, an increase of more than 1,500 from the previous year.

Project PRIDE (Promoting Responsibility in Drug Education), which brings minimum custody inmates to schools and other venues to discuss their personal experiences with drugs and alcohol with young people, completed 128 sessions, with more than 50,000 students attending these sessions.

Our Office of Transitional Services offers programs designed to provide offenders with tools to successfully re-enter the community. This year, they opened the Children and Family Environment center at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women.

The center underscores the importance of the bond between mother and child, a bond that should not be

abandoned during incarceration. It provides a kid-friendly setting, offering youngsters activities that they can enjoy with their mothers. There is also a “brag board” where children can post photos, schoolwork and drawings, as they would on their refrigerator at home.

Another example of the department’s efforts to strengthen the family bond is that inmate telephone calls are now billed at a rate of 4.3 cents per minute. A 15-minute call, whether local or interstate, costs an inmate 66 cents. Between 2005 and 2010, a 15-minute local call would cost an inmate \$2.50, while an interstate call would be \$15.10.

In addition, nearly 400 kiosks have been installed in NJDOC facilities to give inmates access to the JPay system, which streamlines the offender account process. During the past year, the NJDOC has loaded almost 2,000 debit release cards.

Through December 2016, 89% of the inmates have registered on the JPay kiosks. Available services include inmate banking, e-mail, music, E-books, grievance application, games and Media Device Players.

Commissions received by the NJDOC from the JPay system are used for purchases that directly benefit the inmate population, including registration fees to take various vocational licensure exams, law library computer equipment and improving the family visitation areas.

Through these and other initiatives, we will continue to maintain the highest standards of professionalism as we meet the challenges of modern correctional management.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.