

The Massachusetts Legislature has finally agreed in principle on a massive jobs bill. Senate 2059 (formerly S2054) and H3818 will create massive growth in our prison industrial complex. This growth will occur in:

1. The Massachusetts Dept of Corrections
2. The Judiciary via the Dept. of Community Corrections
3. The Massachusetts Parole Board.
4. Each county sheriff's department
5. The Massachusetts Probation Dept.
6. The construction trades and providers of ancillary services required to run criminal justice agencies.

During November our legislature by a combined vote in the House and Senate of 178 to 12 passed the two aforementioned pieces of legislation which will dramatically;

1. Could increase the DOC design capacity between 144% to over 300% of design capacity. California was ordered to release over 40,000 inmates early when its capacity was at 142% of design capacity. Any increase in inmate population will trigger a corresponding increase in state employees as the inmate to staff ratio is close to 3-1.
2. Increase prison construction by hundreds of millions of dollars through 2019. At a projected growth of 2.5% per year through 2019 and at a cost of 100,000 per cell (2.5 per year through 2019= 2333 new bed construction). The cost per bed in the Franklin County jail in 2006 was 223,000 per bed. New prison bed construction by 2019 could reach close to one half billion dollars in taxpayer funded construction, a real jobs bill for the construction and related industries.
3. The Massachusetts Parole Board will have to supervise an additional 2,331 based on 2011 releases directly to the streets. This additional cost of over 11 million dollars per year will add additional parole officers and support staff to the state payroll along with future pension costs.
4. The Habitual Offender provision " Three Strikes" is the biggest potential jobs creation. The possibility of hundreds of offenders serving a minimum of an additional 10 years before having an opportunity to go before the parole board will add hundreds of millions of dollars to our state payroll. At 46,000 per year to incarcerate an individual , the difference between life without parole and parole eligibility after 25 years is approximately 1 million dollars per inmate based on the assumption that life without parole adds an additional 20 years to an inmate's life expectancy (we provide excellent taxpayer funded health care to inmates). Good jobs at good wages.
5. Life without parole will also increase the geriatric job prospects for citizens of the Commonwealth. The National Institute of Corrections estimates that aging prisoners are almost twice as costly to incarcerate. The cost of medical treatment for some elderly inmates can reach over 100,000 per year absent the cost of confinement. Careers working with senior citizens will grow exponentially.

6. Not to be outdone, the Mass. Probation department will have to increase the number of probation officers in response to mandatory post release supervision. The Office of Community Corrections, the states largest pre-release agency, will also see massive growth as the state must find a place to warehouse the results of H3881. Interestingly enough, although we know from research that the largest decreases in recidivism result in corresponding increases in educational attainment, community corrections does not even measure the use of our community colleges or the attainment of post-secondary education credentials for the offenders under its care and supervision. My analysis of community corrections shows that it costs as much to supervise a person in community corrections as it costs for 24 hour care in the DOC. Community corrections should provide us with more than street cleaning and ankle bracelets (we lead the country in the use of these electronic monitoring devices) for over 40,000 per year per potential inmate.

According to the National Institute of Justice, Massachusetts already incarcerates more people per capita than over 44 states. We are already a tough on crime state;

we're just not a smart on crime state. IT is the hope of the CJPC that any mandated changes in our criminal justice system is accompanied by both the use of evidence-based criminal justice policies and programs and corresponding funding for community based alternatives to incarceration.

According to the PEW Report on the States, reductions in recidivism correlates to educational attainment (# 1), followed by employment and training and supportive programs for substance abuse. The Mass. DOC reports that in 2010 over 60% of inmate releases were from medium security institutions. These releases insure corresponding increases in recidivism as the majority of inmate reentry programs are operated in minimum and pre-release programs. We release them without training or supportive systems from walled institutions and expect them not to return within three years.

TWELVE ANGRY MEN (and woman)

There are apparently only twelve members of our legislature who understand the impact of H3811 and S2059. We at the CJPC call on these members of the legislature to join with us and likeminded agencies to insure that with the passage of H3818 there is adequate funding for the education and training for the ex-offender population . We believe this “ jobs bill” should extend to the non-profit community and state operated educational facilities as well. WE call on non-profits to collaborate and develop effective strategies in working with your elected officials to insure safe communities through the use of evidence-based practices that have proven effective in reducing crime and creating employable citizens. Finally, we ask that each of you learn from the lesson we see in California with their passage of the “Three Strikes” law. We should not have to abandon needed priorities (education, health care, housing, jobs etc.) while we increase spending on the criminal justice system. We know, through research, what works in reducing crime. We must learn from the mistakes already made and commit ourselves to utilizing research to drive policy. We cannot afford a jobs bill that breaks the bank and increases crime.

For the black community the stakes are clear. With 1 in 11 young men of color incarcerated, prepare for these numbers to grow.