

Lincoln, Nebraska
18 June 2014

**NEBRASKA JUSTICE REINVESTMENT WORKING GROUP
MEETING MINUTES**

OVERVIEW, CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, INTRODUCTIONS

The Nebraska Justice Reinvestment Working Group (Working Group) is a 19-member group established under the guidelines of LB907, Section 11 to collaborate with the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG Justice Center), a nonprofit association that helps local, state, and federal government agencies through membership dues and grants from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. The CSG Justice Center was asked to provide intense technical assistance to help collect and analyze data and develop appropriate policy options to finance prison reform; to study and identify innovative solutions; to study evidence-based practices to develop a data-driven approach to reduce correctional spending; and to propose justice reinvestment strategies that can decrease crime and reduce recidivism and increase public safety. The Nebraska Legislature unanimously passed LB907 and the bill was signed into law by Governor Heineman on April 16, 2014.

The Working Group is created under the authority of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of Nebraska state government with Governor Dave Heineman; Speaker of the Legislature, Senator Greg Adams; and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Honorable Michael Heavican serving as co-chairmen.

Co-Chairman Governor Dave Heineman called to order the initial meeting of the Working Group at 1:30 p.m., June 18, 2014 at the Country Club of Lincoln, 3200 S. 24th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. Heineman announced the meeting was subject to the Nebraska Open Meetings Act and was preceded by advance publicized notice in the *Lincoln Journal Star*.

Heineman thanked members of the Working Group for their willingness to serve and extended appreciation and support to the CSG Justice Center, the Pew Charitable Trusts and the U.S. Department of Justice Assistance. The Governor expressed his hope for innovative and sensible solutions to our prison challenges. He stated all three branches of government are pleased to begin this work and are hopeful that we can develop cost-effective policies that will create a responsible, long-term prison strategy and increase public safety. Heineman asked the co-chairs for comments.

Co-Chair Speaker Greg Adams, thanked members for their support and indicated these topics were going to be the major issues of the upcoming session. He stated he was grateful we can move on these challenges to produce a comprehensive analysis that is data-based and experienced-based.

Co-Chair Chief Justice Mike Heavican thanked members for being involved and assisting with the work on this project. He stated that the judiciary is especially interested in having viable alternatives for judges at sentencing time.

Heineman proceeded to the roll call with the following members present: Greg Adams, Brad Ashford, Ellen Brokofsky, Esther Casmer, John Colborn, Leo Dobrovolny, Michael Heavican, Lavon Heidemann, Joe Kelly, Michael Kenney, Bob Krist, Ben Matchett, Heath Mello, Gerard Piccolo, Todd Schmaderer, Les Seiler, and Corey Steel. Absent: Darrell Fisher.

Heineman asked members to introduce themselves and give a brief description of their profession.

At this time, Heineman announced he would turn the meeting over to Program Director Marc Pelka from the CSG Justice Center.

NEBRASKA SYSTEM TREND & NEXT STEPS

Marc Pelka, on behalf of the CSG Justice Center, thanked the Working Group and noted this was not his first visit to Nebraska. Pelka explained he visited Nebraska in November to meet with Senator Ashford and Senator Mello who brought together criminal justice stakeholders and policymakers. Pelka returned to Nebraska in March to meet with policymakers in all three branches of state government regarding the issues of public safety and criminal justice.

Pelka explained this project is a true team effort and introduced Ed Weckerly and Chenise Bonilla. Lindsay Carlson with Pew Charitable Trusts also was present.

Pelka said it is important to understand that justice reinvestment is a process, not a program or a boiler plate of policies. The process of justice reinvestment is a comprehensive approach that seeks to redirect corrections spending from programs that aren't reducing crime or improving public safety toward programs that have been proven to work, using data analysis and the experiences of other states. The overall goal is to get a better return on the safety investment.

The CSG Justice Center is a national non-profit, non-partisan membership association of state government officials that engages members of all three branches of state government. The CSG Justice Center provides practical, non-partisan advice informed by the best available evidence. The CSG Justice Center has assisted 18 states using the justice reinvestment approach and cited Texas as the first national justice reinvestment case study.

Under the direction of the Working Group, CSG Justice Center staff will conduct a comprehensive analysis of extensive data sets collected from various relevant state agencies and branches of government. To build a broad picture of statewide criminal justice trends, data from local governments will be collected and analyzed. CSG Justice Center staff will convene focus groups and conduct interviews with people working on the front lines of Nebraska's criminal justice system. Based on these exhaustive quantitative and qualitative analyses, the Working Group will develop options for the Legislature's consideration that are designed both to increase public safety and reduce corrections spending.

Pelka presented basic observations with a PowerPoint presentation. A copy of the presentation is attached and considered part of these minutes.

The overview of the presentation highlighted recent criminal justice trends in Nebraska which the Working Group will be exploring in coming months.

Pelka presented the justice reinvestment approach as a three step process.

Step 1: Analyze Data and Develop Policy Options.

Step 2: Adopt New Policies and Put Reinvestment Strategies Into Place.

Step 3: Measure Performance.

Pelka presented key statistics to the Working Group: Nebraska's prison population climbed 20 percent between FY2003 and FY2013, while corrections spending increased 34

percent. The prison population has been on a steady rise from 4,424 in 2009 to 5,175 as of May 31, 2014, putting the state prisons at 158 percent of capacity. About one-third of people released from prison in FY2013 reentered the community without any supervision.

Working Group members briefly discussed rates of crime as they have increased or decreased indicating they are aware of the brief time that has passed since the Legislature adopted \$14.4 million investment in expanding alternatives to prison and improving rehabilitation programs. The CSG Justice Center was asked to consider the impact of the recent legislation and bring cost estimates to the group's next meeting.

By January 2015, with the assistance of the Working Group, the CSG Justice Center is scheduled to recommend a series of steps to reduce prison spending and reinvest in non-prison alternatives such as community-based treatment programs, drug courts, and intensely supervised probation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS & ADJOURNMENT

Heineman outlined challenges and topics for the August meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:13 p.m.

The next meeting of the Working Group will be held August 26, 2014 at 1:30 p.m. in Lincoln, Nebraska. The location is to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,
Katherine/Kitty Policky