

ASSEMBLY BILL 328 (CHIU)

REENTRY HOUSING PROGRAM

SUMMARY

This bill alleviates homelessness and risk of homelessness among Californians who were formerly incarcerated in prison by reallocating cost savings at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to evidence-based housing and other reentry services.

BACKGROUND

California's prison population will continue to decline in the next few years after California voters, the Legislature, and recent Governors acted over the last decade to address severe prison overcrowding.

The push to reduce prison populations began in 2011 with Governor Brown's realignment, transferring incarcerated people from state prisons to local jails. Propositions 47 (2014) and 57 (2015) continued this reduction by allowing incarcerated people to qualify for shorter sentences. The Legislature subsequently passed a number of reforms to limit sentencing enhancements that were previously imposed regardless of an individual's circumstances, including SB 1393 (2018), and SB 136 (2019). Most recently, Governor Newsom ordered the release of over 3,500 non-violent offenders meeting certain criteria to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

These policies will keep California's prison population at about 100,000 people through 2024, a decrease of over 20% from early 2020, and its lowest level in three decades, resulting in significant cost savings for CDCR. The Legislative Analyst's Office estimates that prison population changes will reduce costs by a total of \$1.5 billion by 2024-25.

THE PROBLEM

As our prison population discharges into our communities, ensuring they have a stable home is paramount to reducing recidivism rates.

People on parole are seven times more likely to recidivate when homeless than when housed. Yet California lacks the infrastructure to accommodate

the needs of those transitioning out of the criminal justice system. Formerly incarcerated people are 27 times more likely to be unstably housed than the general public, and 10 times more likely to become homeless. At this staggering rate, it is unsurprising that about 50% of people experiencing homelessness report a history of incarceration.

Data also show people cannot access meaningful employment without stable housing. Furthermore, one of the biggest drivers of racial disparities in our homeless population is the large number of people exiting prison with nowhere to live. Addressing California's homelessness crisis requires meaningfully addressing discharges into homelessness, and homelessness among formerly incarcerated Californians.

THE SOLUTION

AB 328 redirects a portion of CDCR savings to the Reentry Housing Program to house and provide services to formerly incarcerated individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and a portion to other services to help people effectively reenter society. The Department of Housing and Community Development will allocate funding from the Reentry Housing Program, modeled on a successful initiative in Los Angeles, to counties and homeless Continuums of Care on a competitive basis to pay for long-term housing and services to help people maintain housing and health stability.

This program will result in savings for the state. It costs over \$90,000 per year to incarcerate someone in a California prison, and permanent supportive housing (housing with supportive services) costs about \$20,000 per year. As over 30,000 people will be released on parole or early release annually over the next five years, a targeted housing program can save taxpayers and the state millions of dollars and prevent thousands from homelessness.

When people exit our prisons, their re-integration requires a stable home. Shepherding our own from cell block to sidewalk fails to recognize both a key driver of our homeless epidemic and our duty as a state.

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