



Legislation Text

File #: 2010-0395, **Version:** 1

Clerk 07/12/2010

A MOTION requesting the departments of community and human services and adult and juvenile detention along with public health, superior court, district court, the prosecuting attorney, the sheriff's office and the public defender to develop and submit for council acceptance, a strategic plan for offender reentry from jail facilities and community corrections programs in King County.

WHEREAS, in 2008, President George W. Bush signed into law the Second Chance Act, which provides \$100 million annually to local and state governments for the implementation of reentry programs for released prison and jail inmates, and

WHEREAS, the goal of the Second Chance Act is to provide ex-offenders with needed services in order to reduce recidivism and improve public safety, and

WHEREAS, to apply for these funds, local governments must have in place a strategic plan for reentry developed through collaboration with key stakeholders and jurisdictions must also have in place a reentry task force with representatives from the community and the criminal justice system, and

WHEREAS, reentry is identified by the Council of State Governments as "the process of transitioning from jail to community for individuals leaving incarceration," and

WHEREAS, successful reintegration into the community from jail requires that the released individual obtains stable housing and employment; receives services for and works toward mental health or chemical dependency recovery, or both; and chooses not to engage in criminal behavior, and

WHEREAS, each day King County releases over one hundred thirty offenders back into the community,

and

WHEREAS, King County's Countywide Strategic Plan calls for the county to provide a continuum of jail diversion programs, such as education and treatment, as well as alternatives to secure detention to appropriate offenders, and

WHEREAS, King County participates in a number of collaborative and coordinated bodies such as the criminal justice council, the regional, law, justice and safety committee, the regional jail planning group and the mental illness and drug dependency oversight committee, where strategies for preventing offender recidivism are considered and developed, where regional criminal justice issues are discussed and which may be utilized for a potential offender reentry task force, and

WHEREAS, King County is already offering effective reentry programs for individuals with severe behavioral health needs through the criminal justice initiative. The goals of the criminal justice initiative are to reduce the jail population and recidivism by targeting specialized services to individuals with substance abuse and/or mental health needs. With limited resources, the criminal justice initiative programs provide housing support, assistance obtaining government benefits and treatment for cooccurring disorders of chemical dependence and mental illness, and

WHEREAS, federal funding through the Second Chance Act and other potential funding sources provide resource opportunities that would enable King County to build upon existing successful programs, and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Justice reports that over two-thirds of jail inmates are repeat offenders, having been admitted and released from jail at least once before, and

WHEREAS, many of the individuals released from jail face the same problems leaving jail as they did upon entry, including poverty, unemployment, homelessness and mental illness or chemical dependency, or both, and

WHEREAS, when released jail inmates face many obstacles to obtaining legitimate and stable employment due to low levels of education, limited work history, limited vocational skills and prohibitions

against hiring workers with criminal histories, and

WHEREAS, lack of education is a major obstacle to employment and sixty percent of jail inmates in the United States lack a high school diploma or its equivalent, and

WHEREAS, these barriers to successful community integration should be addressed to reduce the probability that a released individual will reoffend, and

WHEREAS, in fiscal year 2010, \$114 million was appropriated for prisoner reentry programs in the United States Department of Justice, including \$14 million for reentry initiatives in the Federal Bureau of Prisons and \$100 million for Second Chance Act grant programs, and

WHEREAS, in fiscal year 2010, the United States Department of Labor was appropriated \$108,493,000 for prisoner reentry programs, including \$15 million for a transitional jobs grant program, and

WHEREAS, on February 1, 2010, the federal Office of Management and Budget released the President's budget for fiscal year 2011, which includes \$100 million for Second Chance Act grant programs administered by the United States Department of Justice;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The departments of community and human services and adult and juvenile detention along with public health, superior court, district court, the prosecuting attorney, the sheriff's office and the public defender are requested, with assistance from council staff, to develop and submit for council acceptance, a strategic plan for offender reentry from jail facilities and community corrections programs in King County.

B. The strategic plan for offender reentry will guide county policies and services for individuals transitioning from jail to community living with the goal of reducing recidivism and improving public safety. The plan should include a mission statement for ex-offender reentry, a set of policy goals and implementation schedule.

C. The drafting process should include stakeholder outreach to municipalities in King County that operate jail facilities, with an invitation to those municipalities to participate in the reentry strategic planning

process and participate on the reentry task force.

D. The strategic plan for offender reentry should include a reentry task force to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan.

E. Guided by the common vision outlined in the plan, county stakeholders should seek funding to implement new programs and services.

F. By February 1, 2011, the executive shall transmit a motion to the council, for council review and acceptance by motion.