

WE HEARD YOU!!!!

Here are the bills that reflect the outpouring of experience, expertise, evidence, and recommendations that you all have provided throughout the series of “Counting the Costs” hearings over the past year! These bills are well informed, carefully shaped, and ultimately a result of your collective voice. These bills belong to you:

1) Strengthening Women and Families Act

- Lifts the felony drug ban on TANF and food stamps
- Eliminates the prison phone surcharge
- Requires family impact statements on pre-sentencing reports
- Establishes a commission to strengthen bonds between incarcerated parents and their children
- Appoints an Assistant Commissioner for Incarcerated Women
- Prohibits transferring female inmates to male institutions
- Requires classification assignments to place inmates in facilities close as possible to family
- Establishes the Division on Women as the semiannual depository for all female inmate complaints

2) Employment

- Creates a restricted use driver’s license for the purpose of getting to work, education, and training
- Removes categorical employment bars for: limousine services, places that serve alcohol, airports, etc
- Bans the criminal background question box on state, county, and municipal job applications
- Prohibits employers from discriminating against job applicants on the basis of a criminal record
- Requires employers to consider a returning citizen’s certificate of rehabilitation

3) Prisons / Prisoners

- Increases the non-“taxable” amount accrued for inmate accounts
- Establishes the Dept of the Public Advocate as the depository for all inmate complaints
- Requires ACA-based correctional officer training as requested by officers
- Issues a uniform identification card for visiting attorneys

4) Reduction of Recidivism:

- Establishes a “Faith-Based” Programs Coordinator for DOC for returning individuals
- Allows for a 90-day grace period for outstanding fines
- Provides returning inmates with: photo ID; medical records; rap sheet; accounting of fines owed; etc
- Eliminates the post-release Medicaid enrollment gap
- Establishes Mental Health Courts
- Establishes a Prisoner Reentry Commission
- Establishes a Blue Ribbon Panel for Review of Long-Term Prisoners’ Parole Eligibility

5) Education and Rehabilitation:

- Reviews vocational programs in order to meet demand job skills and standards
- Requires inmates to achieve 8th grade literacy with few exceptions
- Requires DOC to make GED classes available to all inmates who request
- Requires GED certificates to be issued by Dept. of Education (DOE)
- Allows formerly incarcerated persons to visit any prison in the State for motivational purposes
- Caps parole 'hits' at 3 years before being given another hearing
- Allows inmates to enter agreements for ed, training, etc that decreases parole terms

6) Court Empowerment:

- Provides discretion to courts to reduce accumulated fines and penalties
- Includes restorative justice mediation as an alternative sentence
- Expands access to expungement

WE NEED YOU!!!

**These bills simply cannot pass through both Houses without you and the clock is ticking!
Here's how to help:**

1) Commit to getting every organization who is/would support bills, a series of "ACTION ALERTS" to their members and listserves. The "ALERTS" will inform re: calling legislators, showing up at hearings, etc.

2) Make personal/group visits to district offices to talk with members and their staffs about the bills Nov-Jan.

To get involved: please contact Rick at rgreenberg@njisj.org or Margaret at mquern@drew.edu
or call #973-624-9400 (start by distributing this informational sheet far and wide!)