

Criminal Justice Reform Commission releases final report

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-Thirteen additional recommendations aimed at reducing prison population and improving public safety-

--Will sign SB 2872 that addresses some of the commission's 27 total recommendations and looks forward to working with the General Assembly to enact others --

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Bruce Rauner today received the final report from the Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform. The 13 new recommendations build on what the commission presented to the Governor last year, recommending a total of 27 changes.

“This report is another important step in repairing our broken criminal justice system and safely reducing the prison population by 25 percent over ten years,” Governor Rauner said. “While our work is not over in achieving this goal, we have made significant achievements in changing the system. We will carefully review the commission’s latest recommendations, and I thank the commissioners for their diligent and thoughtful work.”

The new recommendations cover a variety of topics within the criminal justice system including increasing rehabilitative and treatment services in high-need communities; training on racial and ethnic bias for all people working in the criminal justice system; collecting data on race and ethnicity at every point of the criminal justice system for a comprehensive, system-wide analysis; and realigning sentence recommendations to focus on rehabilitation while still holding people accountable and promoting justice. The report with all 27 recommendations will be posted [here](#).

“The commission identified a number of avenues to transform Illinois’ criminal justice system to safely reduce the prison population,” Commission Chairman and Public Safety Director Rodger Heaton said. “It is important to reduce the state’s overreliance on incarceration, but do so in a way that is thoughtful and holistic so that it preserves and improves public safety. These recommendations, if implemented fully and executed effectively will achieve the Governor’s goal of reducing the prison population by 25 percent in ten years.”

Governor Rauner signed Executive Order 15-14 to create the Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform and charged the commission to research ways to safely reduce the prison population by 25 percent over ten years. Since that time, Illinois’ prison population has declined by 9.6 percent.

“Illinois has become a leader in reforming the criminal justice system because of Governor Rauner’s leadership on this important issue,” said John Maki, commission member and Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Executive Director. “By implementing these recommendations, we will be shaping a system that better balances punishment with rehabilitation to reduce recidivism, which will create safer and stronger communities.”

Last year, the commission submitted 14 initial recommendations to the Governor, many of which have been implemented at the Department of Corrections. The General Assembly also passed two bills based on the original 13 recommendations. In addition, SB2872 sponsored by Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, contains a number of elements from the commission's recommendations. Governor Rauner appreciates Rep. Gordon-Booth's leadership on this issue and looks forward to working with the General Assembly on additional legislation that furthers the commission's work.

The John Howard Association stated: "The John Howard Association commends the Governor's Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform for their work on the final report which was issued today. The recommendations include important ways we can reduce the inmate population in Illinois, as well as increase the likelihood of reentry success as prisoners return home; however, there is much work to be done to concretize some of the reforms to ensure that they are implementable and impactful. JHA hopes that Illinois legislators will move swiftly and decisively to draft and pass laws that will articulate statutory changes with specificity and put these needed and important reforms in place quickly."

"This is a signal that Illinois is willing to take on the hard issues facing the justice system," said Paula Wolfe, Executive Director of the Illinois Justice Project. "Through administrative action or legislation, now is the time for all of us to recognize the imperative for change."

"I want to commend the Governor for taking on this important policy issue," said Pam Rodriguez, Executive Director of Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities. "This report and the work of the Commission sets a clear path to safely reducing our overcrowded prison system and improving community safety through programs and approaches we know work."