



Governor signs bill that takes step toward reducing recidivism

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SPRINGFIELD (Jan. 8, 2018) — Illinois takes another step toward reducing recidivism with the governor's signing today of Senate Bill 1607, which makes corrections to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Act (Public Act 99-0938).

A drafting error in Public Act 99-0938 foiled the intent of the legislation, which was to expand, not restrict, eligibility for earned sentence credit for Illinois Department of Corrections inmates, Gov. Bruce Rauner said.

Such credit is awarded at the discretion of the Department of Corrections director and is given in addition to other types of sentence credit. However, as written, the earned sentence credit provision applied only to those inmates eligible for programming credits, significantly limiting the number of eligible prisoners.

“This bill gives more inmates the opportunity to strive to return sooner to a productive life, without negatively affecting public safety,” Rauner said. “It also cleans up some other language in the Criminal Justice Best Practices Act to clarify rehabilitation-enhancing measures and stop the revolving door that for too long has aptly described our criminal justice system.”

Among the provisions of Senate Bill 1607 are: enhancing judges' capacity to ensure sentencing compliance supports rehabilitation by allowing court services-approved treatment to count toward community service hours; requiring individualized case planning for the IDOC's reentry programming, with a focus on the final year before release; establishing coordinated reentry programming with local, state and community partners; and ensuring programming provides skills and materials necessary for departing inmates' successful return to communities.

The bill further addresses best practices for parolee supervision; establishes within the Illinois Housing Development Authority the Frequent Users System Engagement

initiative to target chronic homelessness among those exiting the prison system; and strengthens the state's violence prevention services. The latter includes a requirement that the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority submit a four-year strategic plan specifically addressing victim and trauma recovery.

The bill signed today also requires that the Victim Compensation Fund reimburses mental health providers for services rendered to violent crime victims under the age of 18, regardless of whether the victims cooperate with law enforcement. This is a change in keeping with victim-centered best practices.

“This bill further supports the bipartisan effort that has been taking place in this state to fix our criminal justice system,” said state Sen. Michael Connelly, R-Naperville, a Senate sponsor of the legislation. “Criminal justice reform and reducing the state's prison population is something the Rauner Administration has taken very seriously, and it's a topic that continues to have support from both sides of the aisle.”

“This is an important step to improve public safety in communities throughout Illinois and reach more crime victims, proactively finding ways to break cycles of violence,” said state Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, D-Peoria, the bill's primary House sponsor. “We must continue to innovate and center our criminal justice policies in what survivors of crime are calling for: smarter investments in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation and help healing after a crime occurs. We've made major strides this year and even more needs to be done to achieve safer communities.”