

Senator Meets With Acting Director of Bureau of Prison to Discuss Prison Reform

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today met with the U.S. Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Acting Director Hugh Hurwitz to discuss the Trump Administration’s implementation of the recently-enacted Grassley-Durbin First Step Act, inadequate staffing, and the overuse of solitary confinement. Durbin also received an update on the activation of the Federal penitentiary in Thomson, Illinois.

“The goal of our criminal justice system should be to rehabilitate prisoners and prepare them for successful reentry into our society—that’s why my colleagues and I worked on

a bipartisan basis to pass the First Step Act into law last year,” said Durbin. “In today’s meeting, I stressed that BOP must address a number of issues that undermine this objective, including serious staffing shortages and the overuse of solitary confinement. We also discussed the critical role of BOP in the implementation of the First Step Act and the law’s requirement for substantial changes in how BOP prepares prisoners for successful reentry into their communities.”

Durbin was one of the lead authors of the First Step Act, which was enacted into law in 2018 after years of bipartisan efforts. The law uses evidence-based recidivism reduction programs to help inmates successfully return to society after serving their sentences. It also reduces draconian mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

In March, Durbin introduced legislation to reduce BOP’s use of solitary confinement and improve conditions for inmates separated from the general prison population. He also pressed Acting Director Hurwitz to take measures to address the significant increase in the use of restricted housing in the Federal prison system. Additionally, in April, Durbin, along with Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Kamala Harris (D-CA), and Brian Schatz (D-HI), requested that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a follow-up study on the use of restricted housing within the BOP.

Durbin has also repeatedly pressed DOJ and BOP to address staffing shortages that jeopardize the safety of Federal correctional officers and prisoners.