HOUSE BILL 2517

By: Pittman

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to prisoner reentry; creating the Oklahoma Prisoner Reentry Pilot Program; stating purpose of pilot program; requiring initiation of pilot program in county with certain population; requiring support for pilot program to be provided by employees of the Department of Corrections; specifying eligibility requirement; stating duties of support personnel; providing for individualized reentry plans; itemizing list of potential services available to inmates; authorizing the Department to enter into public-private partnerships; authorizing the acceptance of funds from philanthropic organizations and federal grants; requiring an assessment of the pilot program; directing the Department to annually submit assessment report to the Governor and Legislature; directing the Department to promulgate policies; providing for codification; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 510.8d of Title 57, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:
A. The State Department of Corrections shall establish the
Oklahoma Prisoner Reentry Pilot Program, as funds become available,
for inmates under the jurisdiction of the Department who have been
sentenced to a term of imprisonment and who are likely to benefit
from case management reentry strategies designed for the specific
needs of inmates transitioning from prison into the community. The
purpose of the pilot program shall be to implement evidence-based
practices and strategies that promote improved public safety
outcomes for inmates reentering society after serving a term of
incarceration and while released on parole.

B. The pilot program shall be initiated in a county that has a
population in excess of five hundred thousand (500,000) according to
the latest Federal Decennial Census. The pilot program shall be
supported by employees of the Department of Corrections focusing
primarily on case management services for eligible inmates selected
for the pilot program. Any inmate with a medium or high risk of
felony arrest shall be eligible for participation in the pilot
program.

C. Employees of the Department shall assist inmates on parole
who are assigned to the pilot program in managing basic needs,
including housing, job training and placement, medical and mental
health care and any additional programming or responsibilities
attendant to the terms of the reentry requirements of the inmate.
Employees of the Department shall also work closely with the inmates
to prepare, monitor, revise, and fulfill individualized inmate reentry plans consistent with this section during the term of the pilot program.

D. Individualized inmate reentry plans shall focus on connecting inmates to services for which the inmate is eligible under existing federal, state, and local laws.

E. Case management services shall be prioritized for inmates identified as potentially benefiting from assistance with the following:

1. Food, including the immediate need and long-term planning for obtaining food;

2. Clothing, including the immediate need to obtain appropriate clothing;

3. Shelter, including the immediate need to obtain housing;

4. Benefits including, but not limited to, general assistance, benefits administered by the federal Social Security Administration, Oklahoma Medicaid, and veterans benefits;

5. Health services, including accessing community mental health, medical, and dental treatment;

6. Substance abuse services, including assisting inmates with obtaining community substance abuse treatment or related 12-step program information and locations;
7. Income, including developing and implementing a feasible plan to obtain income and employment reflecting the highest level of work appropriate for the abilities and experience of the inmate;

8. Identification cards, including assisting reentering inmates with obtaining driver licenses or state identification cards;

9. Life skills, including assisting with the development of skills concerning money management, interviewing for jobs, resume writing, and activities of daily living;

10. Activities, including working with reentering inmates in choosing and engaging in suitable and productive activities;

11. Support systems, including working with reentering inmates on developing a support system which may consist of prosocial friends, family, and community groups and activities such as religious activities, recovery groups, and other social events;

12. Academic and vocational programs, including assisting reentering inmates in developing and implementing a realistic plan to achieve an academic education, vocational training, or both;

13. Discharge planning, including developing post parole plans to sustain the achievements and goals of the reentering inmate to ensure long-term community success; and

14. Transitional support services, including transportation services, twenty-four-hour on-call support and conflict resolution support.
F. The Department shall be authorized to enter into public-private partnerships to assist in providing higher education programs and reentry services for inmates and funding said programs and services for the pilot program.

G. The Department shall be authorized to accept funding for the pilot program from philanthropic organizations or federal grants.

H. The Department shall contract for an evaluation of the pilot program that will assess its effectiveness in reducing recidivism among offenders transitioning from prison into the community.

I. The Department shall submit a report of the findings from its evaluation of the pilot program to the Legislature and the Governor annually for as long as the program is funded.

J. The State Department of Corrections is hereby authorized to promulgate policies necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2023.

COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONS, dated 03/01/2023 - DO PASS.