AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 10, 2025 AMENDED IN SENATE MARCH 24, 2025

SENATE BILL No. 551

Introduced by Senator Cortese (Coauthors: Senators-Umberg Becker, Umberg, and Weber Pierson)

February 20, 2025

An act to amend Sections 1170 and 5000-of of, and to add Section 5000.5 to, the Penal Code, relating to corrections and rehabilitation.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 551, as amended, Cortese. Corrections and rehabilitation: state policy.

Under existing law, the Legislature finds and declares that the purpose of sentencing is public safety achieved through punishment, rehabilitation, and restorative justice, and that programs should be available for incarcerated persons, including educational, rehabilitative, and restorative justice programs that are designed to promote behavioral change and to prepare all incarcerated persons for successful reentry into the community. Existing law directs the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to maintain a mission statement consistent with these principles.

This bill would make legislative findings and declarations relating to corrections and rehabilitation, including, among others, that the Legislature recognizes that life in prison can never be the same as life in a free society, and that active steps should be taken to make conditions in prison as close to normal life as possible, aside from loss of liberty, to ensure that this normalization does not lead to inhumane prison conditions. The bill would direct the department to maintain a mission statement consistent with the principles of normalization and dynamic

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security. security, and would require the department to facilitate access for community-based programs.

Existing law provides that the primary objective of adult incarceration is to facilitate the successful reintegration of the individuals in the department's care back to their communities equipped with the tools to be drug-free, healthy, and employable members of society by providing education, treatment, and rehabilitative and restorative justice programs in a safe and humane environment.

This bill would include that the primary objective of adult incarceration is to promote personal growth for all residents in the department's care. The bill would also provide that the department should develop training for all correctional staff on the principles of normalization and dynamic security in order to meaningfully effectuate these principles.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the 2 following:
 - (a) Incarceration has had negative physical and mental health impacts on correctional officers, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation staff, and incarcerated individuals. Nationally, the average life expectancy of a correctional officer is 59 years of age, which is 16 years shorter than those who do not work in corrections. Further, suicide rates for correctional officers are 39 percent higher than the national working age population. For incarcerated people, each year spent in prison can take two years off of an individual's life expectancy, and the rate of suicide is 19.6 31.2 deaths per 100,000 incarcerated persons.
 - (b) In 2023, Assembly Bill 1104 (Chapter 560, Statutes of 2023) stated that the purpose of incarceration is to provide rehabilitative services to incarcerated people so they can be successfully and safely reintegrated into the community.
 - (c) The principle of dynamic security, which is the direct, ongoing, and respectful communication between correctional staff and incarcerated persons is a key component of the safest prisons.
 - (d) Dynamic security promotes a healthier environment for correctional officers, staff, and individuals within a correction

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correctional facility by improving the relationship between incarcerated individuals and staff. Improved communication, mentorship, and normalization improves health outcomes for department staff and incarcerated individuals by reducing risks such as violent behavior, recidivism, and stress. Access to training for correctional staff to be respectful, fair, and flexible in the use of their authority, and opportunities to study law, ethics, human rights, and behavior change can assist in lowering the mortality rate of correctional officers. Officers who regularly socialize with incarcerated persons and participate in activities to promote open communication and foster relationships create a safer environment for both incarcerated persons and staff.

- (e) The principle of normalization, which states that life inside prison should be as close to life outside of prison as much as possible, prepares incarcerated persons to be productive and contributing members of society upon their release. Incarcerated persons are encouraged to gain skills and provide for their own needs as much as possible to prepare them to be "good neighbors."
- (f) Importing services into prisons from the community to provide medical, mental health, educational, skill building, and library access are imperative to rehabilitative and individual success.
- (g) Creating opportunities for incarcerated persons to maintain their social roles such as father, mother, son, daughter, and friend through in-person and online visits as well as other channels of communication, provides space to practice healthy relationships and motivation for self-development.
- (h) This comprehensive strategy aligns with the goal of creating individuals capable of positive contributions to their communities upon reintegration while simultaneously addressing crucial factors that impact staff well-being.
- (i) It is essential to further amend the Penal Code to clarify that, when the sentence for a crime includes a term of incarceration, the resulting deprivation of liberty satisfies the punishment purposes of sentencing and that the additional purpose of incarceration is rehabilitation and successful reentry back into the community.
- (j) According to the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 95 percent of incarcerated people will be released from prison back into the community.

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(k) Effective rehabilitation increases public safety and builds stronger communities. In order to achieve these goals, it is essential that incarcerated people are able to live with dignity, are treated humanely, are able to maintain and build strong family and community connections, and have access to varied, high-quality educational and rehabilitative programs.

(1) The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is encouraged to allow all incarcerated persons the opportunity to enroll in programs that promote successful return to the community. The Legislature finds and declares that community-based organizations are an integral part of achieving the state's objective of ensuring that all people incarcerated in a state prison have access to rehabilitative programs.

SEC. 2. Section 1170 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

1170. (a) (1) The Legislature finds and declares that the purpose of sentencing is public safety and to reduce recidivism achieved through punishment, rehabilitation, and restorative justice. The Legislature recognizes that life in prison can never be the same as life in a free society. However, active steps should be taken to make conditions in prison as close to normal life as possible, aside from loss of liberty, and to ensure that this normalization does not lead to inhumane prison conditions. When a sentence includes incarceration, the deprivation of liberty satisfies the punishment purpose of sentencing. Therefore Therefore, the prison carceral system should not, except as incidental to justifiable separation or the maintenance of discipline, aggravate the suffering inherent while experiencing imprisonment. The essential purpose of incarceration is rehabilitation and successful community reintegration achieved through education, treatment, and active participation in rehabilitative and restorative justice programs. This purpose is best served by terms that are proportionate to the seriousness of the offense with provision for uniformity in the sentences of people incarcerated for committing the same offense under similar circumstances. These purposes can be achieved only if the period of imprisonment is used to ensure, so far as possible, the promotion of personal growth for all residents and the reintegration of a person into society upon release so that they can lead a law-abiding and self-supporting life, reducing recidivism.

(2) The Legislature recognizes that the principle of dynamic security promotes a healthier environment for correctional officers,

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staff, and individuals within a correction facility by improving the relationship between incarcerated individuals and staff. Improved communication, mentorship, and normalization improves health outcomes for department staff and incarcerated individuals by reducing risks such as violent behavior, recidivism, and stress. The Legislature also recognizes the principle of normalization, which states that life inside prison should be as close to life outside of prison as much as possible, and prepares incarcerated persons to be productive and contributing members of society upon their release.

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(2) The Legislature further finds and declares that programs should be available for incarcerated persons, including, but not limited to, educational, rehabilitative, and restorative justice programs that are designed to promote behavioral change and to prepare all incarcerated persons for successful reentry into the community. The Legislature encourages the development of policies and programs designed to educate and rehabilitate all incarcerated persons. These programs, activities, and services should be delivered in line with the individual treatment needs of incarcerated persons. In implementing this section, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is encouraged to allow all incarcerated persons the opportunity to enroll in programs that promote successful return to the community. The Legislature finds and declares that community-based organizations are an integral part of achieving the state's objective of ensuring that all people incarcerated in a state prison have access to rehabilitative programs. The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is directed to maintain a mission statement consistent with the principles of normalization and dynamic security, shall facilitate access for community-based programs, and should develop training for all correctional staff on the principles of normalization and dynamic security in order to meaningfully effectuate the principles set forth in this section.

(4)

(3) In any case in which the sentence prescribed by statute for a person convicted of a public offense is a term of imprisonment in the state prison, or a term pursuant to subdivision (h), of any specification of three time periods, the court shall sentence the defendant to one of the terms of imprisonment specified unless

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the convicted person is given any other disposition provided by 2 law, including a fine, jail, probation, or the suspension of 3 imposition or execution of sentence or is sentenced pursuant to 4 subdivision (b) of Section 1168 because they had committed their 5 crime prior to July 1, 1977. In sentencing the convicted person, 6 the court shall apply the sentencing rules of the Judicial Council. 7 The court, unless it determines that there are circumstances in 8 mitigation of the sentence prescribed, shall also impose any other 9 term that it is required by law to impose as an additional term. 10 Nothing in this article shall affect any provision of law that imposes 11 the death penalty, that authorizes or restricts the granting of 12 probation or suspending the execution or imposition of sentence, 13 or expressly provides for imprisonment in the state prison for life, 14 except as provided in subdivision (d). In any case in which the 15 amount of preimprisonment credit under Section 2900.5 or any 16 other provision of law is equal to or exceeds any sentence imposed 17 pursuant to this chapter, except for a remaining portion of 18 mandatory supervision imposed pursuant to subparagraph (B) of 19 paragraph (5) of subdivision (h), the entire sentence shall be deemed to have been served, except for the remaining period of 20 21 mandatory supervision, and the defendant shall not be actually 22 delivered to the custody of the secretary or the county correctional 23 administrator. The court shall advise the defendant that they shall 24 serve an applicable period of parole, postrelease community 25 supervision, or mandatory supervision and order the defendant to 26 report to the parole or probation office closest to the defendant's 27 last legal residence, unless the in-custody credits equal the total 28 sentence, including both confinement time and the period of parole, 29 postrelease community supervision, or mandatory supervision. 30 The sentence shall be deemed a separate prior prison term or a 31 sentence of imprisonment in a county jail under subdivision (h) 32 for purposes of Section 667.5, and a copy of the judgment and 33 other necessary documentation shall be forwarded to the secretary. 34

(b) (1) When a judgment of imprisonment is to be imposed and the statute specifies three possible terms, the court shall, in its sound discretion, order imposition of a sentence not to exceed the middle term, except as otherwise provided in paragraph (2).

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(2) The court may impose a sentence exceeding the middle term only when there are circumstances in aggravation of the crime that justify the imposition of a term of imprisonment exceeding the _7_ SB 551

middle term and the facts underlying those circumstances have been stipulated to by the defendant or have been found true beyond a reasonable doubt at trial by the jury or by the judge in a court trial. Except where evidence supporting an aggravating circumstance is admissible to prove or defend against the charged offense or enhancement at trial, or it is otherwise authorized by law, upon request of a defendant, trial on the circumstances in aggravation alleged in the indictment or information shall be bifurcated from the trial of charges and enhancements. The jury shall not be informed of the bifurcated allegations until there has been a conviction of a felony offense.

- (3) Notwithstanding paragraphs (1) and (2), the court may consider the defendant's prior convictions in determining sentencing based on a certified record of conviction without submitting the prior convictions to a jury. This paragraph does not apply to enhancements imposed on prior convictions.
- (4) At least four days prior to the time set for imposition of judgment, either party or the victim, or the family of the victim if the victim is deceased, may submit a statement in aggravation or mitigation to dispute facts in the record or the probation officer's report or to present additional facts. The court may consider the record in the case, the probation officer's report, other reports, including reports received pursuant to Section 1203.03, and statements in aggravation or mitigation submitted by the prosecution, the defendant, or the victim, or the family of the victim if the victim is deceased, and any further evidence introduced at the sentencing hearing.
- (5) The court shall set forth on the record the facts and reasons for choosing the sentence imposed. The court may not impose an upper term by using the fact of any enhancement upon which sentence is imposed under any provision of law. A term of imprisonment shall not be specified if imposition of sentence is suspended.
- (6) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), and unless the court finds that the aggravating circumstances outweigh the mitigating circumstances that imposition of the lower term would be contrary to the interests of justice, the court shall order imposition of the lower term if any of the following was a contributing factor in the commission of the offense:

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(A) The person has experienced psychological, physical, or childhood trauma, including, but not limited to, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or sexual violence.

- (B) The person is a youth or was a youth as defined under subdivision (b) of Section 1016.7 at the time of the commission of the offense.
- (C) Prior to the instant offense, or at the time of the commission of the offense, the person is or was a victim of intimate partner violence or human trafficking.
- (7) Paragraph (6) does not preclude the court from imposing the lower term even if there is no evidence of those circumstances listed in paragraph (6) present.
- (c) The court shall state the reasons for its sentence choice on the record at the time of sentencing. The court shall also inform the defendant that as part of the sentence after expiration of the term they may be on parole for a period as provided in Section 3000 or 3000.08 or postrelease community supervision for a period as provided in Section 3451.
- (d) (1) (A) When a defendant who was under 18 years of age at the time of the commission of the offense for which the defendant was sentenced to imprisonment for life without the possibility of parole has been incarcerated for at least 15 years, the defendant may submit to the sentencing court a petition for recall and resentencing.
- (B) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), this paragraph shall not apply to defendants sentenced to life without parole for an offense where it was pled and proved that the defendant tortured, as described in Section 206, their victim or the victim was a public safety official, including any law enforcement personnel mentioned in Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 830) of Title 3, or any firefighter as described in Section 245.1, as well as any other officer in any segment of law enforcement who is employed by the federal government, the state, or any of its political subdivisions.
- (2) The defendant shall file the original petition with the sentencing court. A copy of the petition shall be served on the agency that prosecuted the case. The petition shall include the defendant's statement that the defendant was under 18 years of age at the time of the crime and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, the defendant's statement

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describing their remorse and work towards rehabilitation, and the defendant's statement that one of the following is true:

- (A) The defendant was convicted pursuant to felony murder or aiding and abetting murder provisions of law.
- (B) The defendant does not have juvenile felony adjudications for assault or other felony crimes with a significant potential for personal harm to victims prior to the offense for which the sentence is being considered for recall.
- (C) The defendant committed the offense with at least one adult codefendant.
- (D) The defendant has performed acts that tend to indicate rehabilitation or the potential for rehabilitation, including, but not limited to, availing themselves of rehabilitative, educational, or vocational programs, if those programs have been available at their classification level and facility, using self-study for self-improvement, or showing evidence of remorse.
- (3) If any of the information required in paragraph (2) is missing from the petition, or if proof of service on the prosecuting agency is not provided, the court shall return the petition to the defendant and advise the defendant that the matter cannot be considered without the missing information.
- (4) A reply to the petition, if any, shall be filed with the court within 60 days of the date on which the prosecuting agency was served with the petition unless a continuance is granted for good cause.
- (5) If the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that one or more of the statements specified in subparagraphs (A) to (D), inclusive, of paragraph (2) is true, the court shall recall the sentence and commitment previously ordered and hold a hearing to resentence the defendant in the same manner as if the defendant had not previously been sentenced, provided that the new sentence, if any, is not greater than the initial sentence. Victims, or victim family members if the victim is deceased, shall retain the rights to participate in the hearing.
- (6) The factors that the court may consider when determining whether to resentence the defendant to a term of imprisonment with the possibility of parole include, but are not limited to, the following:
- (A) The defendant was convicted pursuant to felony murder or aiding and abetting murder provisions of law.

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(B) The defendant does not have juvenile felony adjudications for assault or other felony crimes with a significant potential for personal harm to victims prior to the offense for which the defendant was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

- (C) The defendant committed the offense with at least one adult codefendant.
- (D) Prior to the offense for which the defendant was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, the defendant had insufficient adult support or supervision and had suffered from psychological or physical trauma or significant stress.
- (E) The defendant suffers from cognitive limitations due to mental illness, developmental disabilities, or other factors that did not constitute a defense but influenced the defendant's involvement in the offense.
- (F) The defendant has performed acts that tend to indicate rehabilitation or the potential for rehabilitation, including, but not limited to, availing themselves of rehabilitative, educational, or vocational programs, if those programs have been available at their classification level and facility, using self-study for self-improvement, or showing evidence of remorse.
- (G) The defendant has maintained family ties or connections with others through letter writing, calls, or visits or has eliminated contact with individuals outside of prison who are currently involved with crime.
- (H) The defendant has had no disciplinary actions for violent activities in the last five years in which the defendant was determined to be the aggressor.
- (7) The court shall have the discretion to resentence the defendant in the same manner as if the defendant had not previously been sentenced, provided that the new sentence, if any, is not greater than the initial sentence. The discretion of the court shall be exercised in consideration of the criteria in paragraph (6). Victims, or victim family members if the victim is deceased, shall be notified of the resentencing hearing and shall retain their rights to participate in the hearing.
- (8) Notwithstanding paragraph (7), the court may also resentence the defendant to a term that is less than the initial sentence if any of the following were a contributing factor in the commission of the alleged offense:

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(A) The person has experienced psychological, physical, or childhood trauma, including, but not limited to, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or sexual violence.

- (B) The person is a youth or was a youth as defined under subdivision (b) of Section 1016.7 at the time of the commission of the offense.
- (C) Prior to the instant offense, or at the time of the commission of the offense, the person is or was a victim of intimate partner violence or human trafficking.
- (9) Paragraph (8) does not prohibit the court from resentencing the defendant to a term that is less than the initial sentence, even if none of the circumstances listed in paragraph (8) are present.
- (10) If the sentence is not recalled or the defendant is resentenced to imprisonment for life without the possibility of parole, the defendant may submit another petition for recall and resentencing to the sentencing court when the defendant has been committed to the custody of the department for at least 20 years. If the sentence is not recalled or the defendant is resentenced to imprisonment for life without the possibility of parole under that petition, the defendant may file another petition after having served 24 years. The final petition may be submitted, and the response to that petition shall be determined, during the 25th year of the defendant's sentence.
- (11) In addition to the criteria in paragraph (6), the court may consider any other criteria that the court deems relevant to its decision, so long as the court identifies them on the record, provides a statement of reasons for adopting them, and states why the defendant does or does not satisfy the criteria.
 - (12) This subdivision shall have retroactive application.
- (13) Nothing in this paragraph is intended to diminish or abrogate any rights or remedies otherwise available to the defendant.
- (e) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), the court may recall and resentence an incarcerated person pursuant to the compassionate release program set forth in Section 1172.2.
- (f) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, for purposes of paragraph (3) of subdivision (h), an allegation that a defendant is eligible for state prison due to a prior or current conviction, sentence enhancement, or because the defendant is

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required to register as a sex offender shall not be subject to dismissal pursuant to Section 1385.

- (g) A sentence to the state prison for a determinate term for which only one term is specified is a sentence to state prison under this section.
- (h) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (3), a felony punishable pursuant to this subdivision where the term is not specified in the underlying offense shall be punishable by a term of imprisonment in a county jail for 16 months, or two or three years.
- (2) Except as provided in paragraph (3), a felony punishable pursuant to this subdivision shall be punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for the term described in the underlying offense.
- (3) Notwithstanding paragraphs (1) and (2), where the defendant (A) has a prior or current felony conviction for a serious felony described in subdivision (c) of Section 1192.7 or a prior or current conviction for a violent felony described in subdivision (c) of Section 667.5, (B) has a prior felony conviction in another jurisdiction for an offense that has all the elements of a serious felony described in subdivision (c) of Section 1192.7 or a violent felony described in subdivision (c) of Section 667.5, (C) is required to register as a sex offender pursuant to Chapter 5.5 (commencing with Section 290) of Title 9 of Part 1, or (D) is convicted of a crime and as part of the sentence an enhancement pursuant to Section 186.11 is imposed, an executed sentence for a felony punishable pursuant to this subdivision shall be served in the state prison.
- (4) Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent other dispositions authorized by law, including pretrial diversion, deferred entry of judgment, or an order granting probation pursuant to Section 1203.1.
- (5) (A) Unless the court finds, in the interest of justice, that it is not appropriate in a particular case, the court, when imposing a sentence pursuant to paragraph (1) or (2), shall suspend execution of a concluding portion of the term for a period selected at the court's discretion.
- (B) The portion of a defendant's sentenced term that is suspended pursuant to this paragraph shall be known as mandatory supervision, and, unless otherwise ordered by the court, shall commence upon release from physical custody or an alternative custody program, whichever is later. During the period of mandatory supervision, the defendant shall be supervised by the

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county probation officer in accordance with the terms, conditions, and procedures generally applicable to persons placed on probation for the remaining unserved portion of the sentence imposed by the court. The period of supervision shall be mandatory and may not be earlier terminated, except by court order. Any proceeding to revoke or modify mandatory supervision under this subparagraph shall be conducted pursuant to either subdivisions (a) and (b) of Section 1203.2 or Section 1203.3. During the period when the defendant is under that supervision, unless in actual custody related to the sentence imposed by the court, the defendant shall be entitled to only actual time credit against the term of imprisonment imposed by the court. Any time period that is suspended because a person has absconded shall not be credited toward the period of supervision. A defendant who is subject to search or seizure as part of the terms and conditions of mandatory supervision, is subject to search or seizure only by a probation officer or other peace officer.

(6) When the court is imposing a judgment pursuant to this subdivision concurrent or consecutive to a judgment or judgments previously imposed pursuant to this subdivision in another county or counties, the court rendering the second or other subsequent judgment shall determine the county or counties of incarceration and supervision of the defendant.

- (7) The sentencing changes made by the act that added this subdivision shall be applied prospectively to any person sentenced on or after October 1, 2011.
- (8) The sentencing changes made to paragraph (5) by the act that added this paragraph shall become effective and operative on January 1, 2015, and shall be applied prospectively to any person sentenced on or after January 1, 2015.
- (9) Notwithstanding the separate punishment for any enhancement, any enhancement shall be punishable in a county jail or state prison as required by the underlying offense and not as would be required by the enhancement. The intent of the Legislature in enacting this paragraph is to abrogate the holding in People v. Vega (2014) 222 Cal.App.4th 1374, that if an enhancement specifies service of sentence in state prison, the entire sentence is served in state prison, even if the punishment for the underlying offense is a term of imprisonment in the county jail.
 - SEC. 3. Section 5000 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

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5000. (a) Any reference to the Department of Corrections in this or any other code refers to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Division of Adult Operations.

- (b) The primary objective of adult incarceration in the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall be to-promote personal growth for all residents and facilitate the successful reintegration of the individuals in the department's care back to their communities equipped with the tools to be drug-free, healthy, and employable members of society by providing education, treatment, and rehabilitative and restorative justice programs, all in a safe and humane—environment, environment to promote personal growth for all residents, as set forth in the findings and declarations set forth in Section 1170. Sections 1170 and 5000.5. In implementing this objective, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is encouraged to allow all incarcerated persons the opportunity to enroll in programs that promote successful return to the community.
 - SEC. 4. Section 5000.5 is added to the Penal Code, to read:
- 5000.5. (a) The Legislature hereby finds and declares that the purpose of incarceration is rehabilitation accomplished only if the period of imprisonment is used to maximize personal growth for all residents and facilitate their reintegration into society upon release, enabling them to lead law-abiding and self-sufficient lives, reducing recidivism. The Legislature finds and declares that community-based organizations are an integral part of achieving the state's objective of ensuring that all people incarcerated in a state prison have access to rehabilitative programs.
- (b) The Legislature recognizes that life in prison can never be the same as life in a free society. However, active steps should be taken to make conditions in prison as close to normal life as possible, aside from loss of liberty, and to ensure that this normalization does not lead to inhumane prison conditions.
- (c) It is the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation integrate, to the extent possible, the principles of normalization and dynamic security to establish safer conditions for incarcerated persons and correctional staff. The Legislature recognizes that the principle of dynamic security promotes a healthier environment for correctional officers, staff, and individuals within a correctional facility by improving the relationship between incarcerated individuals and staff. Improved

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1 communication, mentorship, and normalization improve health
2 outcomes for department staff and incarcerated individuals by
3 reducing risks such as violent behavior, recidivism, and stress.
4 The Legislature also recognizes the principle of normalization,
5 which states that life inside prison should be as close to life outside
6 of prison as possible, and should prepare incarcerated persons to
7 be productive and contributing members of society upon their
8 release.

(d) The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is directed to maintain a mission statement consistent with the principles of normalization and dynamic security, shall facilitate access for community-based programs, and should develop training for all correctional staff on the principles of normalization and dynamic security in order to meaningfully effectuate the principles set forth in this section.