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Alaska State Legislature



Representative
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September 8, 2015

Alaska Criminal Justice Commission
510 L Street, Suite 450
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Chair Bryner:

Thank you for lending your time and expertise to criminal justice reform efforts in Alaska. The Legislature created and charged the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission to make recommendations to improve the State's criminal justice system. It is important for this work to continue.

You are well aware of the State's fiscal situation and the revenue shortfall we face. There is pressure to examine all areas and programs of the state. The work that you are doing will be important as the Legislature proceeds with budgetary changes in the areas of criminal justice and the Department of Corrections. As we begin this endeavor, we ask you to deliver policy options to the Legislature that not only avoid future spending, but also achieve savings.

Prison beds are expensive and should be reserved for those who have committed the most serious crimes and who pose the greatest risk to our communities. We have asked for recommendations that enhance public safety, strengthen alternatives to prison, and determine which criminal defendants and offenders can be safely managed with those alternatives. In this budget climate, the ability to invest in treatment and services only becomes possible with a reform package that results in substantial, real net savings to the State.

With that in mind, we call on the Commission to develop policy options for the Legislature to consider aimed at meeting the following goal posts: 1) averting all future prison growth; 2) averting all future prison growth and reducing the current prison population by 15 percent; and 3) averting all future prison growth and reducing the current prison population by 25 percent. We think that it will be important to have the recommendations prior to the start of the second session of the 29th Alaska State Legislature so that they may be considered in the upcoming session and in conjunction with the operating budget deliberations. We request that the recommendations are provided to the Legislature in December 2015.

Thank you for your time and commitment to addressing this issue. We look forward to receiving the recommendations of the Commission.

Handwritten signature of Kevin Meyer in black ink.

Kevin Meyer
Senate President

Handwritten signature of Mike Chenault in black ink.

Mike Chenault
Speaker of the House

Handwritten signature of Mark Neuman in black ink.

Mark Neuman
House Finance Committee, Co-Chair

Handwritten signature of Steve Thompson in blue ink.

Steve Thompson
House Finance Committee, Co-Chair

Handwritten signature of Anna MacKinnon in blue ink.

Anna MacKinnon
Senate Finance Committee, Co-Chair

cc: Alaska Criminal Justice Commission members:
John Coghill, Alaska State Senator
Wes Keller, Alaska State Representative
Jeff Jessee, CEO, Mental Health Trust Authority
Greg Razo, Vice President, Cook Inlet Region, Inc.
Stephanie Rhoades, District Court Judge
Craig Richards, Alaska Attorney General
Kris Sell, Lieutenant, Juneau Police Department
Brenda Stanfill, Director, Interior Alaska Center for Non-Violent Living
Quinlan Steiner, Public Defender Agency
Trevor Stephens, Superior Court Judge
Ronald Taylor, Commissioner, Department of Corrections
Terry Vrabec, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Safety