



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of Labor and
Workforce Development**

Office of the Commissioner

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March 2, 2018

The Honorable Click Bishop
Chair Labor Senate Finance Subcommittee
State Capitol Building, Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Bishop,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of Labor and Workforce Development FY2019 Budget Overview to the Labor Senate Finance Subcommittee on February 27, 2018. Provided below are responses to inquiries raised during the meeting.

Senator Wilson asked if the department's training grants for inmates could be limited to those who will be released soon.

As stated on the record, the department received a federal grant for Linking to Employment Activities Pre-release (LEAP) that has established job centers in Alaska correctional centers. The goal of the program is to reduce recidivism in Alaska by increasing inmate employability. To accomplish this, inmates within six months of release are enrolled in the nine-week LEAP Bridge to Success curriculum. The department also has a State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grant with the Department of Corrections for training inmates; this grant stipulates eligibility for participation be limited to inmates scheduled for release within 12 months.

The department confirmed with Alaska Works Partnership and the Alaska Ironworkers Training Program Trust that only inmates within six months of being released can participate in their correctional center programs. The Department of Corrections would be best suited to respond to whether or not there is other training occurring for inmates that are not soon to be released.

Senator Bishop asked that the department's Corrections liaison work with the Department of Correction's parole section to consider requirements placed on released inmates.

The department's Reentry Coordinator works with the Department of Corrections at both the individual officer and the leadership level as part of his duties under the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority funding. The Coordinator is invited to participate in discussions regarding overall challenges to probation and parole, with the goal of increasing successful employment after incarceration as a factor to decreasing recidivism. The Coordinator, along with that area's Job Center Manager, also participates in each of the Reentry Coalitions across the state; again as a stakeholder, partner, and advocate for increasing employment for reentrants.

Specific details regarding plans and efforts to make adjustments in the parole and probations arena will need to be addressed by the Department of Corrections.

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Senator Gardner requested more information on the impacts to the public and programs of the department's significant staffing reductions.

As stated on the record, the department has seen a 14 percent reduction in its workforce (123 positions) since FY2015. As Chair Bishop stated on the record, some of the department's staffing reductions (29 positions) were the result of discontinued extended unemployment insurance benefit programs that were introduced during the national recession. Other staffing reductions resulted from the closure of the Alaska Vocational Technical Center's (AVTEC) Allied Health programs and Anchorage campus and other reduced program offerings (12 positions). Still others resulted from the elimination of \$5.2 million in state unrestricted general fund supported workforce development programs such as Alaska Youth First, Career and Technical Education grants and Oil and Gas Training grants; Job Center closures and reductions; and the consolidation of the Business Partnerships and Employment Security divisions into the Employment and Training Services Division (41 positions). Others have resulted from reducing capacity in our Research and Analysis section (six positions).

The remainder have resulted from the statewide Shared Services and Office of Information Technology initiatives (12 positions), and our department's considerable efforts to find efficiencies and evaluate every position as it became vacant (23 positions). This has resulted in a lack of capacity for cross-training, which does impact services when the department experiences attrition in positions that have the sole responsibility for a particular service.

As requested by the Subcommittee, enclosed is a copy of the most recent Technical and Vocational Education Program (TVEP) report.

The department will provide the committee with an updated Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas pipeline project workforce development plan once finalized.

Please let me know if you have further questions. I welcome the opportunity to speak with you on these or any other topics related to the department.

Sincerely,



Greg Cashen
Acting Commissioner

Enclosure