



Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association

44 School Street, Suite 300
Boston, Massachusetts 02108



February 5, 2024

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Representative Carlos Gonzalez, Co-Chair
Senator Walter F. Timilty, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
(Sent VIA Email Only)

Re: HB 2325/SB1493- *An Act Related to Rehabilitation, Re-entry, and Human Rights for Incarcerated Persons.*

Dear Chair Gonzalez and Chair Timilty,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association (MSA) and the fourteen duly elected Sheriffs of the Commonwealth, I write in my capacity as Executive Director to ask the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security to report out unfavorably on House Bill (HB) 2325 and Senate Bill (SB) 1493— *An Act Related to Rehabilitation, Re-entry, and Human Rights for Incarcerated Persons*, sponsored by Representative Brandy Oakley and Senator Cynthia Stone Creem.

H2325 and S1493 would institute increased programming for incarcerated individuals, a shared priority for the Sheriffs. It is our collective mission to provide enhanced programming, education, mental health, substance use care, and vocational resources for all individuals in our care to improve outcomes for a successful re-entry back into the community. The Sheriffs are nationally respected leaders in regard to programming and most notably in the areas of substance use and mental health care. Sheriff's Offices from across the United States as well as our Federal DOJ Partners come to Massachusetts to learn from our Sheriffs and their programming whether from a rural, urban, small, medium, or large jail perspective. The Sheriffs will continue to increase programming for incarcerated individuals.

This commitment is shown by the CJ360 Cross Tracking Dashboard, which captures programming offered at the Sheriffs' Offices across the Commonwealth as well as the link to the Programming, Services, Interventions and Reinvestments of each Sheriff's Office, a matrix, designed in collaboration with the leadership of Senator Brownsberger and Representative Day on the 101 Commission. We are proud of the work being done to date and know there are many more ways to improve.

We support any efforts to help enhance the extraordinary work in programming, education, and vocational services currently being done. It is also important to keep in mind that programming is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Each incarcerated individual has different needs and different areas of interest. It is crucial that the Sheriff's Offices can maintain the flexibility to tailor programming to each individual and their unique needs. Additionally, the success of a program is

only as good as the community engagement post-release. Having local, community-based programs available for the continuation of the programming once the individual is released is crucial. Local programming is also tailored to the needs of the community. Learning job skills that are specific to the community allows for individuals to have better employment opportunities upon their release.

Our mission is to provide engaging and enduring programs for incarcerated individuals in every facility in the Commonwealth and we are committed to working with leadership on these endeavors. Along with programming, comes the equal responsibility of allowing our incarcerated individuals increased out-of-cell time. It is the firm belief of the Sheriffs that incarcerated individuals should ideally spend the majority of their time engaged in voluntary treatment, programming, educational and vocational activities. Each individual housing unit in every facility is unique and tailored to the unique population in that unit.

Although we may share the collective goal of providing at least eight (8) hours of out of cell time daily, it is critical to remember that operationally, deference must be given to the correctional administrators and the needs of that population. Eight (8) hours may be not best for the safety and security of that particular housing unit and individuals housed therein. We welcome the opportunity to work with Senator Creem and Representative Oakley on this portion of the legislation.

We respectfully request **the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security to report out unfavorably on this legislation.** Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you require additional information or have any questions.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carrie Hill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carrie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Hill".

Carrie Hill
Executive Director