

# NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY



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## SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PRISON SAFETY

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### REPORT TO THE 2019 REGULAR SESSION OF THE 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

JUNE 10, 2019

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# TRANSMITTAL LETTER


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June 10, 2019

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 2019 REGULAR SESSION  
OF THE 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PRISON SAFETY, respectfully submits  
the following report to the 2019 Regular Session of the 2019 General Assembly.

  
Senator Bob Steinburg, Chair

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# COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

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The Senate Select Committee on Prison Safety met eight times from March 11, 2019 until June 10, 2019. Below is a brief summary of the Committee's proceedings. Detailed meeting minutes, presentations, and other information from each Committee meeting are available on the Committee's [website](#).

The Committee held its first meeting on March 11, 2019, and heard a presentation from Mr. John Poteat from Fiscal Research who provided the Committee with an overview of the organizational structure and budgetary requirements for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. Following the presentation, the Chair opened the meeting for comments from members of the Committee and the general public.

The Committee held its second meeting on March 18, 2019, and heard a presentation from Mr. Boyd Bennett on ways to improve the organizational and leadership structure within the Division of Prisons. Mr. Bennett served as the Director of the Division of Prisons from 2001-2009. The meeting concluded with comments and questions from members of the Committee and the general public.

The Committee held its third meeting on March 25, 2019, and heard a presentation from Mr. Timothy Dale from Fiscal Research regarding the current compensation structure for correctional personnel. The Committee also heard a presentation from Mr. Samuel Adams, Correctional Officer III, on ways to improve hiring and retention for correctional officers. The meeting included comments and questions from members of the Committee and the general public.

The Committee held its fourth meeting on April 1, 2019, which consisted of a brainstorming session on ways to improve hiring and retention within the Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice. Committee members discussed (i) additional benefit options for correctional personnel, (ii) the pros and cons of an *8-hour work shift* versus a *12-hour work shift*, (iii) implementation of recruitment and retention bonuses for qualifying personnel, and (iv) the use of a *step-pay plan* for correctional personnel structured similar to the plan for North Carolina State Highway Patrol Officers.

The Committee held its fifth meeting on April 8, 2019, and heard comments from Mr. Gary Mohr, a consultant with the Department of Public Safety. Mr. Mohr's comments focused on methods for reducing vacancy rates within the Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice, the need for a STEP pay system for correctional officers, and better engagement among senior and lower level corrections staff. The meeting included comments from members of the Committee and the general public.

The Committee held its sixth meeting on April 15, 2019, and heard presentations from Dr. Gary Junker, Director of Behavioral Health Services for the Department of Public Safety, and Mr. Michael Dail, Human Resources Director for the Department of Public Safety. Mr. Junker's presentation focused on behavioral health services provided to inmates within adult corrections, while Mr. Dail's presentation focused on behavioral and emotional support services available to State employees and correctional personnel.

The Committee held its seventh meeting on April 29, 2019, and heard a presentation from Elizabeth Morris, Chief Executive Officer of The FMRT Group, on the topic of psychological and medical evaluations of correctional officers. The Committee also heard a presentation on mental health and prison safety from Robin Huffman of the North Carolina Psychiatric Association and Kay Castillo of the National Association of Social Workers. The meeting included questions and comments from members of the Committee and the general public.

The Committee held its seventh meeting on May 13, 2019 which consisted of a discussion of the various themes presented to the Committee during its previous meetings.

The Committee held its most recent meeting on June 10, 2019 to discuss recommendations to be presented to the General Assembly. After discussion of the recommendations, the Committee adopted this report.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Committee makes the following recommendations:

**1. Establishment of separate Department of Correction and Department of Juvenile Justice**

The Committee recommends that the General Assembly consider enactment of legislation to remove the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice from the Department of Public Safety and establish a separate Department of Correction and a separate Department of Juvenile Justice. The Committee notes that there is significant support for the idea of retaining the responsibilities and personnel for probation and parole supervision within the Department of Public Safety and recommends that the General Assembly consider that option.

**2. Increase death benefit**

The Committee recommends that the General Assembly raise the death benefit for correctional facility employees killed in the line of duty. The Committee further recommends that the General Assembly explore options for funding an increased death benefit, including the purchase by the State of an insurance policy.

**3. Fill vacancies and encourage retention**

The Committee recommends that the General Assembly invest additional funds into options designed to encourage applicants for vacancies within the correctional system and to provide incentive for existing employees to remain employed in the correctional system. Some of the options the Committee encourages the General Assembly to consider include:

- Equitable salary increases for all staff
- Differentiated salary increases designed to address salary compression issues
- Differential salary supplements for facilities with high vacancies
- Referral bonuses
- Retention bonuses
- Educational assistance, including free tuition in the Community College system.

**4. Shift variations**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Safety explore the use of 8-hour shifts in correctional facilities where it might be beneficial, particularly in close custody facilities.

**5. Mental health services for employees**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Safety explore ways to improve the availability and accessibility of mental health services for corrections employees.

**6. Training for new and existing employees**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Safety continue to strengthen and expand the training required for new employees and the training available to both new and existing employees.

**7. Reinstate examination for promotion**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Safety reinstate the examination process as a requirement for promotion within the correctional staff structure.

**8. Mental health services for inmates**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Safety develop methods to provide better mental health services to inmates, including improving mental health screenings in intake procedures and reducing the use of solitary confinement.

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## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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2019-2020

**President Pro Tempore of the Senate**  
**Appointments:**

Sen. Bob Steinburg (Chair)

Sen. Danny Britt

Sen. Jim Burgin

Sen. Warren Daniel

Sen. Milton F. "Toby" Fitch, Jr.

Sen. Kathy Harrington

Sen. Ralph Hise

Sen. Tom McInnis

Sen. Floyd McKissick, Jr.

Sen. Harper Peterson

Sen. Norman Sanderson

Sen. Terry Van Duyn

Sen. Joyce Waddell