

CARE FIRST...JAIL LAST

REDUCING MASS INCARCERATION WITH REHABILITATION THROUGH JAIL DIVERSION PROGRAMS

SB2500/HB2481 - JAIL DIVERSION FUND



BRIEF STATEMENT:

Tennessee currently has an incarceration rate 10% above the national average⁶. 67% of the prison population qualify for or have a substance abuse disorder.²

Many of these incarcerations are non-violent and offenders are at risk of re-offending if they do not receive help.⁵

Prisons are overcrowded and cost significant taxpayer dollars.³ This is money that could be used on other community projects.



Drug Abuse Violations have been the #1 cause for arrest since 2003⁹



Mental Health symptoms worsen because of incarceration¹¹



Prisons are being used as mental hospitals¹²

-41,570-

Arrests in 2021 for drug possession in Tennessee⁴

-1 in 4-

Offenders will be reincarcerated within 3 years¹⁰

What is a jail diversion program?

The purpose of jail diversion programs (JDP) are to reroute offenders away from the justice system and offer arrestees with the option to receive rehabilitation services for mental health, substance abuse, housing, employment, and/or developmental needs.

Effectiveness of Jail Diversion Programs

Seven Tennessee counties implemented JDPs between 2018 through 2020 that benefitted more than 13,000 people who were successfully diverted from a jail sentencing to receiving rehabilitation services.⁵

Proposed Solution

Reinstate TN SB2500/HS2841 into the next general assembly session in January of 2023.

SB2500/HS2841 would require the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to oversee the distribution of grant funding to operate state funded, jail diversion programs across the state of Tennessee.

\$1 not invested in rehabilitation costs **\$7** in related crime cost.³

Current recidivism rate costs taxpayers over **1 billion** in operating corrections costs.⁷

Shortcomings of Current Policy

Prison populations continue to increase, and the crime/offense rate has not decreased.⁶ Taxpayers spend about 1.2 billion in 2020 for Tennessee Department of Correction operations.⁸

Tennessee SB2500/HB2841 was taken off notice due to having a cost of \$18 million being needed to implement JDPs statewide.¹¹

Personal Story

Tracy, from Hamblen County, Tennessee, is a victim of domestic violence and has been a drug addict since age 14. She was arrested for possession of methamphetamine and booked into the county jail. She qualified for the county's 12-week +JDP program. The program housed Tracy and other women in an apartment and where she received counseling, support, and help finding a job. Tracy graduated from the program and is focused on becoming a drug and alcohol counselor for teens. She is quoted saying "I don't want it anymore. That life is done. I can't go back. I won't go back. I have too many things that I want to do, things that I should have finished a long time ago, and I will do."⁹

Sources

1. Betapudi, H., & Walton, A. (2021 December 20). Pandemics, prisons, and policy: An overview of criminal justice and public health in Tennessee. Tennessee Justice Center. <https://www.tnjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Criminal-Justice-and-Public-Health-Policy-Brief-Final-12.20.21.pdf>
2. Bronson, J., & Berzofsky, M. (2017, June) Indicators of mental health problems reported by prisoners and jail inmates, 2011-13. Office of Justice Programs. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/imhprpji1112.pdf>
3. Cahill, K., Slone, H. D., Trautwein, J., Moore, K., Dierenfeldt, R., Hart, J., & Tourville, J. (2021, May 19). Substance misuse and incarceration in Tennessee. The University of Tennessee System. <https://smart.ips.tennessee.edu/smart-policy-network/policy-briefs/substance-misuse-incarceration/>
4. Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.). Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer: Tennessee. FBI.GOV. Retrieved September 21, 2022, from <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/arrest>
5. The Department of Mental Health and Substances Abuse (n.d.) Pre-arrest diversion infrastructure program. TN.Gov. <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/mental-health-services/adults/pre-arrest-diversion-infrastructure-program.html>
6. Tennessee State Government, Tennessee State Government. (2019, December). Criminal justice investment taskforce. TN.Gov. <https://www.tn.gov/governor/priorities/criminal-justice-investment-task-force.html>
7. Tennessee Department of Correction. (2020, July). Tennessee department of corrections: Annual report 2020. TN.gov. <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/correction/documents/AnnualReport2020.pdf>
8. Tennessee General Assembly Fiscal Review Committee. (2022, March 5). Fiscal Note: SB 2500-HB 2841. TN.gov. <https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/112/Fiscal/SB2500.pdf>
9. Sallinger, M. (2018, June 13). Jail-to-work program for women sees first success story. WBIR 10 News. <https://www.wbir.com/article/news/local/jail-to-work-program-for-women-sees-first-success-stories/51-564248911>
10. State Records Tennessee. (n.d.). Tennessee Inmate Records. Staterocords.org. <https://tennessee.state.records.org/inmate>
11. Sahlin, J. (2018, May 20). The prison problem: Recidivism rates and mental health. Good Therapy. <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/prison-problem-recidivism-rates-mental-health-0520187>
12. Hall, B. (2015, September 7). Mentally ill fill prisons with sometimes deadly results. News Channel 5 Nashville. <https://www.newschannel5.com/news/newschannel-5-investigates/mentally-ill-fill-prisons-with-sometimes-deadly-results>

Previous Leading Organizations

- Alliance Healthcare Services, Shelby County
- Volunteer Behavioral Health Hamilton & Putnam County
- Madison County Government, Madison County
- Helen Ross McNabb Center, Hamblen County
- Knox County Government, Knox County
- Mental Health Cooperative, Davidson County

Media Consult Contact:

Abraham Navarro | 573-933-5097 |
anavarro@southern.edu

Campaign Address

4881 Taylor Circle, Collegedale TN 37315
P: 1-800-123-CARE | www.carefirstjaillast.org