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Arizona's Prison Population Projected to Grow Twice as Fast as General Resident Population, Independent Study Finds

State Selected as One of Five Justice Reinvestment Learning Sites

The number of people in Arizona state prisons is soaring, and if current policies remain unchanged, the state will need to find over \$3 billion in new funding to build and operate new prisons over the next 10 years, according to a study released by the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

“Arizona’s policy and funding decisions must be based on good data—and the latest research,” said Senate Majority Whip John Huppenthal who serves on the Board of Directors for the Justice Center. “Unless we have that foundation, I’m not confident we’re doing everything we can to fight crime effectively and to be efficient with taxpayer dollars.”

James Austin, Ph.D. an expert consultant to the Justice Center, who is assisting other states across the country including Nevada and Texas noted, “In the past five years, Arizona’s prison population has increased 32.1 percent. If current trends continue, the growth rate of Arizona’s prison population will accelerate, exceeding that of nearly every other state in the U.S.”

Highlights of the study include the following:

- *Arizona’s state prison population is projected to increase 52 percent over the next 10 years, from 34,864 to 56,660.

- *Recent and projected increases in Arizona’s prison population significantly outpaces the growth in the state’s resident population, which is expected to increase by 26.2 percent from 2005 -2015.

- *Under current policies and existing trends, the state will need to build 20,000 more beds than the state has already appropriated funds to build and operate.

- *Approximately half the admissions to state prison in 2006 were for a violation of a condition of probation or parole.

*The number of women admitted to Arizona state prisons (most often on drug-related charges) has increased 60 percent in the last 6 years, which is twice the rate of increase of male admissions

The Justice Center has been consulting with the Governor, a bipartisan group of legislative leaders and other state and county leaders over the past eight months. Raw correctional data was collected from many areas of Arizona's criminal justice system as the basis for this independent preliminary analysis. Officials from the Justice Center will now prepare a comprehensive assessment of the prison population, recent crime trends, and policy options to increase public safety and to curb increases in corrections spending. The Justice Center anticipates the completion of this "Justice Reinvestment Report" in early March.

"If we decide to do nothing, we are in effect committing an additional one billion dollars in state tax dollars to grow our prison system. Whatever decision we make, let's at least be sure it's a conscious one, after a rigorous review of data and an understanding of what neighboring states are doing that are also facing this kind of growth in their corrections system," said Rep. Bill Konopnicki, who along with Rep. Mark Anderson have been consulting with the Justice Center on this project.

"I welcome this independent and non-partisan review of our criminal justice system and look forward to the Justice Center's comprehensive analysis," Huppenthal concluded.

Justice Center officials announced today Arizona's selection as one of just five states to be a learning site for its Justice Reinvestment Initiative. "Arizona state leaders, working together across party lines, are asking how they can be smart about fighting crime, using data to design effective corrections policies. The problem-solving approach being employed in Arizona is one from which other states can learn," said Michael Thompson, Director of the Council of State Governments Justice Center. Other states receiving technical assistance from the Justice Center include Texas, Nevada, Kansas and Pennsylvania. Arizona was selected because of a bipartisan interest in data-driven criminal justice policies.

The Justice Center's Justice Reinvestment Initiative receives funding support through the Public Safety Performance Project, an operating project of The Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, a division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Public Safety Performance Project helps states advance fiscally sound, data-driven policies and practices in sentencing and corrections that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable and control corrections costs. Pew's project works with the Council of State Governments Justice Center and other partners to provide nonpartisan research, analysis and expertise to states.

"Arizona officials have a tremendous opportunity to tackle the tough issues and avoid budget-busting prison costs. We are excited to be working with the CSG Justice Center and other partners to help the state make critical public safety decisions based on hard

data,” said Susan Urahn, Managing Director of State Policy Initiatives at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels from all branches of government. The Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies, informed by available evidence, to increase public safety and strengthen communities.

The Justice Reinvestment Initiative, a national project of the Justice Center, provides a data-driven strategy for policymakers to increase public safety, reduce spending on corrections, and improve conditions in the neighborhoods to which most people released from prison return.