

**REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**Report of the Public Safety  
Compensation Work Group  
(Chapter 1, 2021 SSII)**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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# Commonwealth of Virginia



## Public Safety Compensation Work Group: Report to the Governor and General Assembly

November 15, 2021

# Commonwealth of Virginia

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The Honorable Ralph S. Northam  
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia  
Office of the Governor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Virginia General Assembly  
Pocahontas Building  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Northam and Members of the Virginia General Assembly:

Chapter 1, *2021 Acts of Assembly*, Special Session II directed the Governor to convene a work group to address the compensation structure for correctional officers at the Department of Corrections, deputy sheriffs within sheriffs' departments, and regional jail officers. The workgroup was directed to include staff from the Department of Human Resource Management, the Compensation Board, the Department of Corrections, and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission. The language further required the workgroup to deliver recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by October 15, 2021. This report is submitted in satisfaction of the requirements in Chapter 1.

## Executive Summary

Chapter 1, *2021 Acts of Assembly*, Special Session II directed the Governor to convene a work group to address the compensation structure for correctional officers at the Department of Corrections, deputy sheriffs within sheriffs' departments, and regional jail officers. To address the requirements in Chapter 1, a workgroup was convened under the auspices of the Secretaries of Finance, Administration, and Public Safety and Homeland Security. As required, the work group included staff from the Department of Human Resource Management, the Compensation Board, the Department of Corrections, and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission. Representatives also attended from the Department State Police, the Department of Planning and Budget, the Virginia Sheriffs Association, the Virginia Association of Regional Jails, and the Virginia Law Enforcement Sheriffs.

Several common concerns and issues were identified by work group participants as factors that affect the ability of all public safety agencies to recruit and retain personnel. Like other state employees, pay for correctional officers and state troopers has increased in recent years but continues to be lower than the compensation provided by competitive employers. Of particular concern for constitutional officers at sheriffs' offices and regional jails is the growing dependency on local salary supplements to account for regional variations in the cost of living and the impact of state budget reductions. Like all employees, state and local public safety personnel are impacted by salary compression, where pay increases for entry-level staff are not matched by proportional increases for senior staff. This compression of the salary scale hinders retention efforts. However, salary increases alone may not be sufficient to address current or future challenges, particularly if the pool of willing and qualified applicants is decreasing. Accordingly, a more comprehensive approach to planning for public safety personnel may be warranted, as part of a more holistic approach to addressing these essential positions.

## Work Group Activities

Chapter 1, *2021 Acts of Assembly*, Special Session II directed the Governor to convene a work group to address the compensation structure for correctional officers at the Department of Corrections, deputy sheriffs within sheriffs' departments, and regional jail officers.<sup>1</sup> The work group was directed to include staff from the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM), the Compensation Board (CB), the Department of Corrections (VADOC), and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). Chapter 1 also directed the creation of a separate work group, with a separate reporting requirement, to review recruitment and retention at the Department of State Police (VSP).<sup>2</sup> To avoid duplication of effort, this work group did not directly assess that aspect of public safety compensation.

To address the requirements in Chapter 1, a workgroup was convened under the auspices of the Secretaries of Finance, Administration, and Public Safety and Homeland Security. As required, the work group included senior representatives from DHRM, the CB, VADOC, and JLARC, as well as VSP. Representatives also attended from the Department of Planning and Budget, the House Appropriation and Senate Finance & Appropriations Committees the Virginia Sheriffs Association, the Virginia Association of Regional Jails, and the Virginia Law Enforcement Sheriffs.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 7 at <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?213+ful+CHAP0001+pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See page 10 at note 1, and <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2021/RD529>

The workgroup met weekly from late October through early November 2021. Owing to certain unavoidable exigencies, the work group was not able to meet prior to the reporting deadline, but has made every effort to complete this review in a timely manner. Because this report represents a collaborative effort of all work group participants, the work group employed an approach in which the contributions and statements of all participants contributed to this report.

In addition, the work group had a relatively short period of time within which to assess recruitment, retention, and compensation issues at a number of organizations, and then identify actions to address them. Each organization appears to have substantial recruiting and retention challenges. What is less clear, though, is the degree to which these current challenges are related to salary alone, and the advisability of approaching compensation and labor force issues in a systemic, comprehensive way in comparison to the agency-specific approach that has been taken historically. Moreover, given the clear and persistent effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor market generally, it is unclear whether the current dynamics represent short-term disruptions or a longer-term shift in the labor force.

### **Compensation in State Government Department of Human Resources Management**

The Virginia Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) conducts a Bi-Annual Comparison of Compensation pursuant to Code of Virginia § 2.2 1202 (B). The report, which was completed by DHRM and Deloitte Consulting, LLP, compares compensation within the Commonwealth to the market, using both private and public sector comparators. The analysis looks at classified positions that are covered by the Virginia Personnel Act, of which there are about 56,000 positions. More specifically, the survey looks at 213 occupations, of which 192 are compared to general industry and 21 are compared to other governmental employers. The data used in the report cover about 75 percent of the state employee population (about 42,000 positions), using July 2021 state employee salary data.

#### Commonwealth Lags Behind Both the Private and Public Sectors

In general, the analysis found that, on average, the Commonwealth lags behind both the private and public sectors. Base salaries are below comparable private sector positions by 15.7 percent, and below public sector positions by 11.9 percent. However, for some individual jobs the Commonwealth is above market, while in other cases state compensation falls even more substantially below market. These comparisons are performed by assigning each position within the Commonwealth to a specific federal standard occupational classification. There are some important considerations when evaluating these data. It may be the case that some of the comparator data reflect the effects of collective bargaining where salaries are typically higher, but identifying those instances would require additional analysis. Similarly, there may be a geographic or locational component to compensation which should be examined. Lastly, this analysis is based upon a comparison of the cash value (base pay to base pay), and does not account for the value of benefits.

Using the Virginia Department of Corrections as an example, some positions within that agency fall into the Public Safety Occupational Family, which is the broadest category. Each Family is comprised of several Career Groups, and in turn each Group consists of several Roles which are the individual positions. To illustrate how these market comparisons are made, Public Safety has a Career Group known as Security Services, which has several Roles including a Security Officer III. This position corresponds to the federal classification known as Correctional Officers and Jailers, which allows DHRM

to compare the base pay of that position to other employers that use the same federal classification. The state salary data shows that the average annualized base for a Security Officer III is \$40,100. This is \$9,400 (19 percent) lower than the median base pay of other employers (\$49,500). To look at this another way, the state salary of \$40,100 most closely corresponds to employers whose pay is in the lowest quarter (the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile) which is \$39,600. And the state salary is substantially below employers in the top quarter (the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile), where pay for a comparable position is \$66,000 (39 percent higher).

#### Salary Adjustments Should Be Part of a Holistic Approach

Although base pay is a crucial component of employee compensation, adjustments to salaries will not be sufficient to address the state's workforce issues. Looking at the Commonwealth as a whole, there is a substantial increase in turnover at the five-year mark, indicating that agencies face many challenges when trying to retain new employees. This indicates that additional efforts need to be made so that new employees see state employment as a viable and valuable career pathway. Another critical component of employee retention is their relationship with their supervisor and their work family. In short, attention needs to be paid not just to salaries but also to the work experience and work environment, as part of a holistic approach. To assist with this, agencies already have several tools in place, such as retention bonuses, moving and relocation reimbursement, educational leave, tuition reimbursement, and the 529 plan. However, a recurring challenge for agencies is the difficulty of planning in an environment with constrained and inconsistent resources. The availability of funds remains a critical resource that is essential to workforce management.

### **Compensation, Retention, and Recruitment of Security Staff Virginia Department of Corrections**

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) is nationally and internationally recognized as a leader, and for the fifth consecutive year VADOC has had either the lowest or the second lowest rate of recidivism in the nation, indicating that VADOC is preparing inmates for successful re-entry. This equates to fewer victims, a safer public, and better opportunities for the children of inmates. These awards also show that agency staff are highly sought after by other agencies and the private sector.

#### Ongoing Vacancies Drive a Cycle that Hinders Operations and Increases Risk

However, vacancies trigger a cycle that impacts VADOC's ability to provide secure environments inside correctional facilities and communities. Although VADOC actively recruits, trains, and deploys available staff to sustain essential operations, without a qualified, trained security workforce it is not feasible to safely offer programming and services associated with recidivism reduction. In turn, unsuccessful reentry into the community results in increased victims, decreased public safety, and an increase in families without appropriate support systems.

*Correctional Officer Vacancies Have Increased 68 Percent in the Last 12 Months.* Current VADOC workforce data show that only 80 percent (10,313) of 12,840 classified positions are filled. In addition to recruiting challenges, VADOC faces retention challenges. In 2021, 24 percent of security staff have worked with the state for two years or less, while almost one half (45 percent) of current security staff have been with the state less than five years. As a result, in over one third of the facilities, 50 percent of the staff has less than five years of experience.

More specifically, between FY 2018 and FY 2020, the average number of correctional officer (CO) vacancies ranged between 650 and 682 each year. Since that time, there have been an average of an additional 60 CO vacancies each month since May 2020, and increase of six percent per month. In FY 2021, the number of monthly CO vacancies has increased by 68 percent over the last 12 months. As a result, by September 30, 2021, VADOC had 1,680 CO vacancies; this equates to an agency wide CO vacancy rate of 27.4 percent.

*VADOC Turnover Rates Continue to Outpace Other State Agencies by 10 Percent.* VADOC's agency turnover rate as of July 2021 is 25.8 percent compared to the 15.7 percent rate for all state agencies. Since FY 2019, VADOC's turnover rate has increased by 4.0 percent annually compared to a 0.3 percent annual increase for all state agencies. Workplaces experiencing high turnover struggle with continuity and consistency. VADOC security staff are experiencing conditions that can increase job dissatisfaction such as excessive overtime, burnout, and morale erosion, and which heightens job stress. Continuation of such work conditions, which are adverse to employee well-being and work-life balance, exacerbates efforts to both attract and retain employees.

*Assaults and Workers Compensation Claims Increase Along with Turnover.* The VADOC facility with the largest correctional officer turnover rate (Sussex, with 54 percent) also had the highest number of serious assaults on staff (5) in CY 2020. Of the nine serious assaults on staff, four occurred in months where vacancies increased from the previous month, and five involved new employees. Moreover, the VADOC facility with the second largest correctional officer turnover rate (Greensville, with 46 percent) had the largest number of serious assaults on inmates (6) in CY 2020. Overall, 31 of the 36 serious assaults on inmates at VADOC-operated facilities occurred in a month where the number of vacancies increased from the previous month. Notably, as vacancies increased Workers' Compensation Claims also increased, growing by 58 percent in 2020. Vacancies also contribute to staff burnout and frustration.

*Correctional Officers Are Drafted Daily (Overtime) to Maintain Operations.* Staff vacancies may require curtailment of activities, operations, and programs which also effect essential support areas (i.e., training, mail, personal property and visitation). In some cases, one person may need to perform the job functions of two people. VADOC has also responded by instituting drafting of staff, where COs are used on an unscheduled basis (changing shifts or days off) to fill essential posts each day. On average, VADOC facilities draft 410 COs every day. This includes 136 holdovers from an earlier shift who worked a double shift, 212 who were not scheduled to work that day, and 64 staff transferred from other locations.

*Essential Security Posts Remain Unfilled Each Day.* Yet even after drafting staff, 404 essential posts remain unfilled each day statewide (17 percent). These steps are necessary because VADOC's secure facilities have to remain operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, regardless of weather conditions and/or state of emergency status. If these conditions persist, VADOC is considering whether certain sections of institutions may need to be vacated because of insufficient staff.

#### VADOC Has Implemented Pilot Programs to Augment Coverage of Essential Posts

To maintain operations, the agency has implemented three pilot programs. Among these is a Roving CO Program, which allow COs in the western region of the state to be temporarily reassigned to the eastern region (21 staff are currently participating in this pilot program.) During their minimum six-month period of reassignment, the COs receive a premium pay rate as well as lodging and travel reimbursement. On a pilot basis, the VADOC has also completed post audits and identified limited posts that CO trainees—who are not yet certified—may work after completion of several phases of their certification training.



This provides a measure of flexibility for deployment of Officers-In-Training during the most acute staffing shortages. Another pilot intervention at facilities is to allow non-security staff to volunteer to complete a security training module and then provide supervision for inmate group activities led by treatment/education staff or religious volunteers from the community. This is done on an overtime basis to ensure that the non-security operational routines are maintained.

VADOC Is Unable to Successfully Compete for a Decreasing Applicant Pool

When it comes to recruitment, VADOC is just one employer competing in challenging labor markets to attract talent; supply of qualified applicants is low and demand is high. Three key indicators confirm that its current constraints will not yield adequate results going into the future.

*Starting Pay for CO Positions Lags Behind the Market.* An ongoing challenge for VADOC is salary pressure from comparable employers, where the agency’s ability to recruit and retain staff is directly affected by the pay practices of other agencies, causing VADOC to regularly lose staff to these other agencies. As shown in Table 1, for Security Officer III positions, an applicant with previous correctional or military experience will start closer to the upper end of that range.

VADOC	Dept. of Juvenile Justice	Va. State Police	Regional Jails	Sheriffs’ Offices	Federal Inst. in Va.
Security Off. III	Security Off. III-IV				
\$35,064 to 38,214	\$32,572 to 37,042	\$47,833 to 52,617	\$35,362 to 78,973	\$43,000 to 50,786	\$43,495 to 62,615
<i>As of August 2021.</i>					

It is also important to note that VADOC’s certified security staff are being directly targeted by advertising from competing criminal justice agencies. One local jail targeted certified VADOC security staff, promising higher pay and less training time. Private sector organizations also prefer certified staff.

*Active Recruitment Efforts Have Not Been Successful.* VADOC has implemented several active recruitment strategies to attract applicants, but these efforts have not resulted in an increase in qualified candidates. To date, these efforts have included:

- Sign-on bonus for CO positions ranging from \$4,500 to \$10,000;
- Employee referral bonus for current staff ranging up to \$1,500;
- Advertisements on billboards, yard/street signs, radio, online and newspaper; and
- Participation in a variety of job fairs and special hiring events.

*Applicant Pool Is Limited and Has Been Decreasing.* To be qualified to work in a correctional setting, an applicant must have several specific characteristics:

- Ability to pass background check
- Willing to work in prison/congregate setting
- Willing to work at relatively remote locations
- Willing to work shifts and mandatory overtime at a 24x7 operation

To address these challenges, VADOC has proposed responses to address current compensation while also planning for a career ladder by addressing salary compression. As shown in Table 2, the proposal would increase the starting salary of COs, while also increasing salaries for supervisors accordingly. Even in the best of times, the number of applicants with these characteristics is limited. However, from calendar year 2016 to 2020 the applicant pool actually decreased by 25 percent.

- Applicant flow peak for all positions in CY 2016 included 37,660 submitted applications.
- Applicant flow peak for all positions in CY 2020 included 28,320 submitted applications.

As a result, the applicant pool is not adequate to support the large-scale recruitment that is required.

#### Proposal: Implement an Integrated Compensation Management Program that Recognizes that Correctional Officers Are a Key Resource

The current use of extraordinary measures is not sustainable, and the decrease in the applicant pool indicates that the challenges may be long-term. To ensure that VADOC is able to provide safe, secure, and healthy working conditions, and maintain the operational stability, VADOC proposes an integrated compensation management program that blends attention to the job structure, pay structure and pay practices that are needed to fully support VADOC's mission of long-term and lasting public safety in the Commonwealth. This proposal has several essential elements, which are addressed below.

*Recognize the Premier Benchmark Status of the CO Position.* The starting point for this proposal is recognition that the CO position is clearly a benchmark job in the Commonwealth. VADOC is the state's largest employer of COs, with an authorized FTE of 6,154 security positions. Based on May 2020 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, VADOC alone accounts for 44 percent of the COs and jailers in Virginia. In addition, VADOC's CO workforce is very diverse (66 percent Male/34 percent Female) and race (51 percent White, 46 percent Black/African-American, 2 percent Hispanic/Latino, 1 percent Other).

*Address the Changing Qualifications of a Successful CO.* Historically, CO applicants have been selected based on minimum qualifications. However, the qualifications needed to be a fully contributing CO have progressed. This includes the need for individuals to remain engaged while on the job, acquiring and demonstrating strong communication, technology, and leadership skills, as well as the ability to understand, implement, and model evidence-based practices. Offering salaries that lag behind the job market makes it impossible for VADOC to attract and motivate applicants who possess the capacity to acquire and apply these needed qualities.

*Enable VADOC to Address External Equity (Competitive Starting Salaries).* VADOC requests funding to establish a competitive starting salary for COs of \$44,000, an increase from the current level of \$35,064 (Table 2). This adjustment will allow VADOC to move from a market "lag" to a "match" position. VADOC also requests an increase in minimum salary levels through its security ranks. Some security supervisor positions are filled with applicants from outside the agency so external equity also applies to these roles.

*Enable VADOC to Address Internal Equity (Salary Compression).* VADOC requests funding to alleviate salary compression for its COs and security supervisors across the ranks. While starting salary levels can assist with this area of attention, more support is needed. Consistent with the Commonwealth's

Table 2		
Rank (Work Title)	Current	Proposed
Correctional Officer	\$35,064	\$44,000
Sergeant	\$40,347	\$48,400
Lieutenant	\$44,382	\$53,240
Captain	\$48,821	\$58,564
Major	\$53,703	\$64,420

accepted approaches to dealing with salary compression, VADOC requests support on two counts of eligibility: alignment and longevity. Table 3 shows proposed adjustments to address the current degree of salary compression among security staff.

Table 3			
Rank	Length of Service	Alignment	Longevity
Correctional Officer	3 to 5 years	\$300	\$50 per year, up to 30 years
Correctional Officer	5 or more years	\$600	\$100 per year, up to 30 years
Sergeant-Major	3 to 5 years	\$1,500	\$100 per year, up to 30 years

*Enable VADOC to Recognize Progressive Career Development.* These adjustments would assist VADOC in building a security staff career progression ladder. However, not all COs want to be supervisors, and not all get to that level. As a result, COs remain at the starting salary level for many years, while new officers get the same compensation. So VADOC is proposing to build in different steps for COs so they can progress to spots along the continuum. For those who seek advancement, they may be promoted to a supervisory position (Sergeant through Major), and the proposal has a second step for each of those supervisory positions as well in order to prevent compression.

This career ladder element goes beyond job structure and pay structure (internal and external pay equity) to integrate a crucial pay practices element. VADOC's current challenge did not occur as an event; it has been a phenomenon that has evolved over time despite valiant efforts to halt and reverse its undesirable impact. Because of the funding investment required, the financial support is the missing link that VADOC has not had access to in the past. Historically, there has been interest from both legislative and executive branch partners for a Master CO program, but circumstances never allowed for its introduction.

*Estimated Total Costs.* Projected costs of the proposed integrated compensation management program are shown in Table 4.

Table 4		
Staff	Action	Cost
COs (4,155 of 4,604 positions)	Increase CO minimum	\$26,379,335
Supervisors (913 of 1,122 positions)	Increase Supervisor minimum	\$5,453,340
COs	Address compression	\$5,445,046
Supervisors	Address compression	\$2,773,747
VADOC staff	Career Progression Ladder	\$12,000,000
Security positions (1,550 vacancies) *	Address vacancies	\$16,599,049
	Total Cost (including benefits)	\$68,650,517

\*Assumes VADOC will be able to fill all vacancies, which historical trends indicate has not been achieved.

## **Compensation of Sheriffs' Deputies and Regional Jail Officers Compensation Board**

The mechanism for funding the salaries and other costs of constitutional officers in the Commonwealth differs from the approach taken for state employees, such as Virginia Department of Corrections personnel. Locally-elected constitutional officers in Virginia are funded by the Commonwealth through the Compensation Board (CB), and include elected sheriffs. While regional jails are operated by appointed superintendents and not elected sheriffs, these jails are also funded by the Compensation Board in like fashion, as their boards or authorities include the elected sheriffs of the localities that participate in the regional jails in lieu of operating their own local jails. Both sheriffs' offices and regional jails depend upon the funding provided by the Commonwealth for the state's share of their total cost of operations. The Compensation Board is responsible for determining a reasonable budget for the state's share of the total cost of office operations for sheriffs' offices and regional jails.

### Sheriffs' Officers Have Differing Responsibilities

While all regional jails provide correctional services, some sheriffs' offices provide correctional services in addition to their other responsibilities. All sheriffs' offices provide court services, which includes both courtroom security and the service of civil process. Some sheriffs' offices also have primary law enforcement duties: for example, 86 county sheriffs have primary law enforcement responsibility in their localities (nine county sheriffs do not provide primary law enforcement, where these services are provided by local police departments). City sheriffs do not have law enforcement responsibilities; these services are provided by local police departments. In addition, 36 sheriffs' offices also have responsibility for operating a local jail and the remaining sheriffs' offices that do not operate a local jail participate in one of the 22 regional jails, which are formed by a group of two or more (up to 10) localities.

As a result of these differing responsibilities, there are three different types of sworn deputy sheriffs: court services ("CS") deputies, correctional ("C") deputies, and law enforcement ("LE") deputies; regional jails employ sworn correctional officers. Sheriffs and regional jails also have other "non-sworn" positions such as kitchen staff, medical and treatment staff, plus records and administrative staff.

### Compensation Board Supports Operations of Constitutional Officers

Constitutional officers are the service sector of representative democracy. Rather than representing citizens in a legislative body, these officials represent the citizens in the delivery of basic government services. Being locally elected, these officers report to the citizenry and deliver their service within the confines of state law, local ordinance, and a combination of state and local funding. In order to maintain a system of checks and balances, as well as separation of powers, the Commonwealth has a long-standing policy that funds appropriated by the legislature to constitutional officers should be allocated by an executive branch agency to ensure constitutional officers remain independent of funding administered solely by local governments.

The CB's mission is to determine a fair and reasonable budget for the total cost of operations for constitutional officers, and to reimburse the Commonwealth's share of these costs. To look at this another way, the CB is charged with allocating funding to provide a base level of support across all constitutional offices. To accomplish its mission, the CB sets a budget for salaries and expenses for each constitutional office within the appropriation established by the legislature for each constitutional officer group, and local governments are required to provide, at a minimum, the budget that the

Compensation Board sets for each office. The Appropriations Act also identifies the actual number of positions that the Compensation Board can allocate across each group of constitutional offices, in accordance with established staffing methodologies. The Compensation Board budgets funding for the allocated positions in each office, and then the local government is responsible for funding the allocated positions at the minimum of the individual budgeted salaries. The Compensation Board reimburses the local government on a monthly basis for expenses incurred under the established budget.

Similar to the approach used for state employees, the Compensation Board has a salary scale for each of the constitutional office types that includes different pay bands with a minimum and a maximum salary. The CB sets the salaries within those pay bands for each classification level. The CB currently sets a starting salary of \$35,149 for an entry-level deputy sheriff or regional jail officer.

As it pertains to public safety, the Code of Virginia, § 15.2 1609.2 (E), requires the CB to provide funding that ensures “the salary range of any full-time deputy sheriff...shall be no less than that of a correctional officer within the classification and pay system for state employees.” In other words, the salary structure and salaries paid by the CB for sheriffs’ deputies and regional jail officers should at least match those established by the Commonwealth for correctional officers at VADOC.

#### Most Local Governments Provide Supplemental Funding Above Required Minimum

The CB allocates a total of 12,443 positions across 135 sheriffs’ offices and 22 regional jails. Regarding sworn deputies and officers specifically, regional jails are allocated 3,710 sworn correctional officer positions and sheriffs’ offices are allocated 6,704 sworn deputy positions. In addition, a number of sheriffs’ offices, and some regional jails, have locally-funded positions in addition to the state-funded positions.

Many localities have established compensation plans that include both the CB-established pay scale and also locally-funded salary supplements. In part this results from regional cost of living variations and competition for employees. Local funding also supports the operational and administrative expenses in constitutional offices and regional jails, because the CB provides minimal funding other than salaries. This arrangement is the consequence of budget reductions over the last couple of decades, where initially the non-salary support that had been provided by the state to constitutional offices for non-salary operational costs was minimized or eliminated. Further reductions during this period meant these offices either had to defund positions or reduce salaries, leading to requests for local supplements. The CB also is not funded to provide any salary differentials for different regions across Virginia.

The combined effect of these factors has been a much heavier reliance by constitutional offices on the funding decisions of local governments. However, there are many sheriffs and regional jails that rely solely on state funding for their deputies and regional jail officers. At a statewide level, the average salary of an entry-level deputy is \$43,544. However, this includes an average local salary supplement of \$8,395, which is in addition to the CB-set salary of \$35,149.

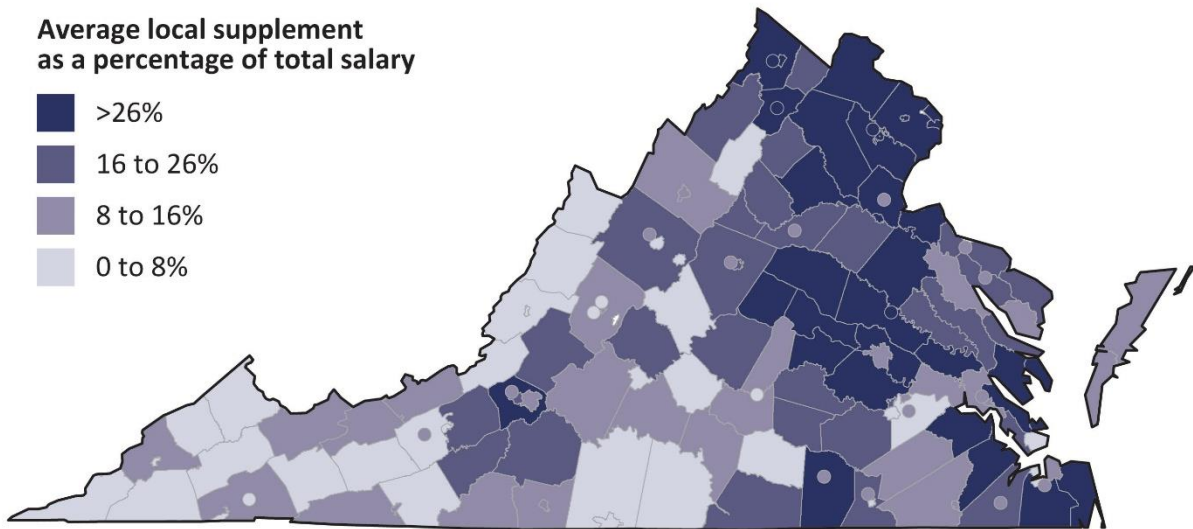
This average local supplement, however, paints a misleading picture because there is very broad variation in entry-level salaries across different areas of Virginia. For example, out of 147 offices:

- Twenty offices have supplements that are 50 percent or more of the CB-established amount:
  - Eleven of those offices provide supplements that are 75 percent or more.
  - Most of the higher-end supplements are found in Northern Virginia and Tidewater.

- In contrast, 69 offices have supplements of less than 20 percent:
  - Thirty-six of those offices have supplements of less than 10 percent
  - Five of those offices do not have any local supplement for entry-level deputies.

This variation is illustrated by Figure 1, which shows the differences statewide in the percentage of total salary that comes from local supplements. As shown by the map, supplements provided by localities in the “urban crescent” stretching from Northern Virginia to Tidewater contribute a higher percentage of total salary than in other parts of the Commonwealth.

Figure 1: Variation in Local Supplements as a Percentage of Total Salary



NOTE: Sworn officers grades 7-11

Source: JLARC staff analysis of State Compensation Board data. Circles represent regional jails.

Overall, therefore, at least 75 percent of state-funded sworn positions fall below the statewide average salary:

- Forty-four offices (representing 7,885 of 10,537 sworn positions funded by the CB) have a combined average salary of less than \$42,000; and
- Fifty-five offices (representing 8,460 of 10,537 sworn positions) have a combined average salary of less than \$44,000.

#### Turnover Approaches 35 Percent in Some Offices

Annual turnover rates increased for CB-funded positions from FY 2015 to FY 2021, with differing rates depending on the type of position:

- For entry-level deputy sheriff positions, turnover increased from 14.6 percent to 20.5 percent, although there is some variation in the rates for different types of deputies (CS, C and LE). For all CB-funded sworn deputy positions, turnover increased from 14 percent to 19.34 percent.

- For CB-funded entry-level sworn regional jail officer positions, turnover increased from 23.19 percent to 42.04 percent.

Of the 12,443 positions that the CB allocates across all offices, about 85 percent are currently filled (10,566) and 15 percent remain unfilled. Looking just at sworn positions, 14 percent of the 10,414 positions are currently unfilled. Another 165 positions are allocated, but even though they have been identified as positions that are needed, they are not funded by the state due to previous budget reductions. In general, unfilled positions (at snapshot points in time) have increased since FY 2015, growing from seven to 15 percent in FY 2022.

The rates cited above for vacancies related to unfilled positions at points in time and times to fill positions are likely higher in reality than these statistics show, however, because of local practices in managing state funding revenues. Where sheriffs' offices or regional jails have locally-funded positions in addition to CB-funded positions, the office may move a locally-funded individual into a vacant Compensation Board funded position to avoid a reduction in state revenue during the recruitment period, thereby reducing the average time to fill the state-funded position while the vacancy remains. This practice occurs less often in regional jails because there are fewer locally-funded positions in the regional jails.

Similar to VADOC, as a result of these trends in turnover and vacancy, 45 percent of sworn deputy sheriffs and regional jail officers have two or fewer years of service, and 59 percent of sworn deputies/officers have five or fewer years of service. The average for all sworn staff is about 6.3 years, and they have very few staff with 30 or more years of service at this point in time.

The available information on the reasons for turnover is largely anecdotal. But one factor that may prompt some individuals to leave employment involves the very nature of the job. For example, in the early 2010s several local jails closed as regional jails began opening. This led to an increase in turnover among those positions that were moved from a locally-run jail to a regional jail because the dynamic differed between the types of facilities. In a sheriffs' office, a deputy who worked in the jail would also sometimes work with law enforcement and the courts; local jails were also smaller than regional jails. A similar situation may exist involving regional jails and VADOC's facilities. State or federal correctional facilities generally have a specific classification level and a larger number of programs for inmates. Local and regional jails are often the opposite, with several classification levels and a smaller number of programs, which may make the nature of the job more challenging.

#### Inconsistent Salaries and Lack of Progression Hinder Recruitment at Sheriffs' Offices and Regional Jails

As VADOC noted, the applicant pool is limited, which leads to increased competition. For example, local offices often note the impact of competition from state agencies, in particular the Virginia State Police's Lateral Transfer program. Many instances have been cited where an individual accepts local employment, becomes certified, and then moves to a state agency. There may also be less interest in being a deputy sheriff than in previous years.

*Sheriffs and Regional Jails Report that Current Salaries Are Not Sufficient to Attract Candidates.* As noted above, statute requires that CB-funded salaries for full-time deputy sheriffs should be no less than that of a VADOC correctional officer within the classification and pay system for state employees. At this point in time, the state-funded salaries for sworn deputy and jail officer positions are similar to that of VADOC employees. However, there has been some variation over the last few years where different

positions received different increases at certain points in time. As shown in Table 5, sheriffs' deputies received an increase in February, 2019. A comparable increase was not provided to regional jail officers until July, 2021. At this point the salary scales are the same for sheriffs' deputies and regional jail officers.

	Sheriff	Deputy Sheriff or Regional Jail Officer	Administrative Support
FY 2014	3.00 %	3.00 %	3.00 %
FY 2016	2.00	2.00 % *	2.00
FY 2017	0.00	0.00	0.00
FY 2018	2.00	2.00 + \$80/yr. of service	2.00 + \$65/yr. of service
FY 2019	0.00	0.00 ^	0.00
FY 2020	3.00	3.00	3.00
FY 2022	5.00	5.00 ~	5.00
* Up to 4.63% for grade 7 deputies & reg. jail officers only, to raise min. salary			
^ +\$871 for grade 7 +911 for grade 8 sheriffs' deputies only (2.75% of min salary)			
~ 5.00% + \$897 for grade 7 + 938 for grade 8 regional jail officers only			
Does not include the \$3,000 bonus that is currently being implemented for sheriffs' deputies and regional jail officers, or the \$500 bonus that was approved last year.			

The cumulative effect of these increases is that the minimum starting salary of a CB-funded entry level sworn deputy or jail officer with less than 1 year of service has increased by 20.9 percent over a six-year period (\$29,081 to \$35,149) from FY 2015 to FY 2022. The salary for entry-level personnel with more than one year of service increased by 15.6 percent, from \$31,788 to \$36,752. Table 6 provides more information on the pay bands and salary levels for each classification level.

Class Levels/Pay Bands for Sheriffs' Deputies & Reg Jail Officers	Pay Band Minimum	Pay Band Maximum	Lowest Salary	Average Salary
Grade 7/PB3 (entry-year 1)	\$35,149	\$62,377	\$35,149	\$36,057
Grade 8/PB3 (entry-year 2+)	\$36,752	\$62,377	\$35,766	\$38,309
Grade 9/PB6 (Master 3+ years)	\$40,170	\$80,183	\$38,752	\$41,160
Grades 9-11/PB6 (rank/ supervisor)	\$38,415	\$80,183	\$36,751	\$43,961
Grades 12-14/PB8 (Dep/ Officers/Reg Jail Supts.)	\$51,062	\$134,838	\$51,062	\$60,766

However, these increases have not wholly addressed the salary concerns. For example, 58 percent (1,529 of 2,649) of grade 7 sheriffs' deputies and regional jail officers are funded at the minimum CB-established salary. Similarly, 35 percent (1,577 of 4,527) of grade 8 sheriffs' deputies and regional jail officers are funded at the minimum CB-established salary. In addition, the ranked deputy and regional jail officer positions over that period of time saw an increase of about 12.52 percent, not 20.9 percent, because the increases provided to the entry level positions were not proportionally applied to higher classification levels. This difference has enhanced compression issues in these offices. In addition, in FY 2022, 149 of the 7,176 CB-funded entry-level sworn deputies and jail officers that are allocated by the CB are unfunded due to prior, unrestored state budget reductions.

*Recent Change to Increase After First-Year Hinders Recruitment and Retention.* Another factor that differentiates local offices from state agencies involves the pay increase provided to entry-level deputies



and regional jail officers. Starting six years ago, these positions began receiving a lower pay increase than state employees. Prior to that time, a new deputy or a regional jail officer would receive a 9.3 percent salary increase after the first year of service, or graduation from an academy. This increase is still provided to all other state-funded public safety officers at one year of service.

This change resulted from an effort in FY 2016 to increase the entry level salary for deputy sheriffs that had unintended consequences. Two different classification levels, grade 7 and grade 8, are both considered to be entry level positions. But when the increase was provided only to grade 7 positions, and not proportionally funded for grade 8 positions, it eroded the increase that could then be provided at the one-year mark, which was reduced to 4.56 percent. In effect, the change essentially moved a portion of the second year pay to the first year as opposed to an overall increase in compensation for both entry-level grades. This resulted in salary compression via a reduction in the ability to increase salaries for employees in their second year; when a new deputy sheriff or new regional jail officer is hired at the entry level of salary of \$35,149, they receive a 4.56 percent increase at one year of service instead of the 9.3 to 10 percent that is received by all other state-funded public safety officers.

*Limited Availability of Master Deputy/Jail Officer Program Hinders Progression.* As noted earlier, positions in grade levels 7 and 8 are considered to be entry-level. A person in a grade seven position would be within their first year of service, and those in grade eight positions would be employees that have surpassed their one-year anniversary; these classifications fall into pay band 3. In addition, there are ranked deputy sheriffs and regional jail officers, and these include positions that are classified at grades 9-14 within two separate pay bands. If an individual moves out of an entry level classification into a ranked or supervisory position, they would move to the next pay band (pay band 6) containing grades 9 through 11, or subsequently to pay band 8, containing grades 12 through 14. The Compensation Board does not assign titles or ranks to the classification structure. Within these grades and pay bands, each local sheriff's office or regional jail will establish their own rank structure as needed to match their type and size of office.

Some sheriffs' deputies and regional jail officers have access to and participate in a Master Deputy Program, which provides a career progression ladder for entry-level deputies or regional jail officers that are not necessarily going to progress along the ranked structure. This program, which is created in the Appropriation Act under the CB, provides that if an individual is not moving into the supervisory/rank structure they have an opportunity to enter the master deputy or master jail officer program. This program provides access to the grade nine classification level in pay band 6 (the entry-point for ranked/supervisory positions), and provides a 9.3 percent salary increase. The Appropriation Act has language that allows for up to 20 percent of entry level grade seven and eight deputies to be selected for the master deputy position if they meet the program criteria, including certain educational, professional and performance requirements. After meeting the criteria, they would then need to be selected through a competitive process by a committee in their sheriff's office or regional jail. The master deputy/jail officer program is available to staff in local offices where the sheriff or regional jail superintendent has chosen to participate in the program and funding has been appropriated; 83 percent of offices currently participate.

#### Proposal to Address Salaries Has Three Components

Based upon input and recommendations from the Virginia Sheriffs' Association, the Virginia Association of Regional Jails, and the Virginia Law Enforcement Sheriffs' Association, CB staff developed two proposed funding options to increase the entry-level salary of all sworn deputies and jail officers. In

addition, proposals were developed to restore the first year increase back to prior levels, and to address salary compression.

*Increase the Entry-Level Salary of All Sworn Deputies and Jail Officers.* Two options were developed that would increase state support for entry level positions and thereby bring the majority up to the statewide average salary.

- Option 1 - Increase the CB-funded entry-level salary to \$42,000. This would provide an average salary increase of \$4,446 to 75 percent of sworn positions, at an annualized cost of \$38.6 million. Presently, 75 percent (7,885 of 10,537) of CB-funded sworn positions have a salary less than \$42,000. (When including local supplements, this represents 44 offices that have a combined state and local average entry-level salary of less than \$42,000.)
- Option 2 - Increase the CB-funded entry-level salary to \$44,000. This would provide an average salary increase of \$6,695 to 80 percent of sworn positions, at an annualized cost of \$56.6 million. Presently, 80 percent (8,460 of 10,537) of CB-funded sworn positions have a salary less than \$44,000. (When including local supplements, this represents 55 offices that have a combined state and local average entry-level salary of less than \$44,000.)

These proposals include the cost differential for maintaining the current automated increase of 4.56 percent upon completion of one-year of service for entry-level positions, but unlike the VADOC proposals, do not consider any proportional or other base level increases to positions in the ranked classifications/pay bands that would be needed to mitigate the significant compression that would occur. Note that pay band minimums and lowest paid salaries in each pay band except the highest all currently fall below proposals for a new entry-level salary of \$42,000 or \$44,000. Without some proportional adjustment, entry-level and ranked positions would all have the same minimum salary.

*Restore the entry-level sworn deputy/officer regrade after 12 months in a Compensation Board-funded position.* As described earlier, starting in FY 2016 the first-year salary increase for grade 7 entry-level positions was decreased from 9.3 percent to 4.56 percent. Although this increased the entry-level minimum salary of a new sheriffs' deputy or regional jail officer, a proportional increase for grade 8 entry-level deputies/jail officers was not funded, thus eroding the increase awarded at the completion of one year of service. Currently, 5,165 sworn entry-level positions have received an automatic regrade upon 12-months in an entry-level CB-funded sworn position (includes master deputies), with an average salary increase of \$1,696. If the percentage increase was restored to 9.3 percent, the average salary increase would increase from \$1,696 to \$3,463 at an annualized cost of \$10,044,462.

*Provide a Compression-Relieving Increase Based on Years of Sworn Service.* About 64 percent (6,700 of 10,537) of sworn positions have a minimum of 3 years of service in a CB-funded position, with an average of 11 years of service. Providing a compression-relieving increase of \$100 per year of service to all CB-funded positions with at least 3 years, and a cap of 30 years of service, would provide an average salary increase of \$1,103 to 6,700 positions at an annualized cost of \$8.1 million

### **Statement of the Virginia Sheriffs Association**

The Virginia Sheriffs Association (VSA) represents 118 (of 123) Virginia sheriffs, and 9,803 deputies and staff. Currently, there are 6,618 state-funded deputy sheriffs in Virginia, and all are sworn law enforcement officers.

Sheriffs' Offices across Virginia are responsible for about 25 percent of all arrests (49,841 in 2020), responded to 3.1 million calls for service (8,500 per day), and served over 3 million pre- and post-judicial orders. In the course of performing these duties, Sheriffs' Offices accounted for over 16 percent (322) of the assaults on law enforcement officers in 2020.

When assessing the starting salaries for deputies, it is important to include the salary supplements that are provided by some localities. The use of such supplements makes those Sheriffs' Offices different from both state agencies and Offices that are not supplemented. The starting salary (un-supplemented) for a deputy is \$35,148. However, deputies in some areas qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). For example, in one county where the budgeted (non-supplemented) salary is \$36,751, even with the value of fringe benefits included the monthly income is \$3,697. That amount is less than the income limits needed to qualify for SNAP for a family of four (\$4,417). So, in many cases, the local supplement is needed or else the deputy qualifies for public assistance.

The presence of local supplements does not appear to be solely related to local ability to pay, but also to the ability of the Sheriff to convince the locality to provide a supplement. Additional consideration should be given to whether a locality with adequate resources should be required to provide a supplement. In the past there has been a reluctance on the part of policymakers to provide targeted salary increases to Sheriffs' Offices where the locality does not provide a supplement because this would tend to incentivize local governments to not provide a supplement. In addition to supplements, the potential for a regional salary adjustment factor based on the cost of living should be considered.

A further concern is the number of deputies that are recruited by other law enforcement agencies. Many deputies also move to high-paying positions elsewhere. Frequently, a deputy will be recruited, go to the Criminal Justice Training Academy to become certified, and then be recruited by a law enforcement agency in a city or other wealthier locality. For example, Lunenburg County had 14 Deputies in September 2020. Of this amount, two positions were vacant; three went to another law enforcement agency once they were certified; two others went to the Department of State Police (VSP). This left seven deputies in total, which is less than the number provided for by the statutory 1 to 1,500 ratio. More broadly, In September 2020, 19 Sheriffs' Offices lost a total of 26 Deputy Sheriffs to VSP's "Lateral Transfer Program."

The VSA has identified three actions that are needed to ensure adequate staffing for Sheriffs' Offices. steps. The first should be to restore the previous formula where pay increased after graduation from the academy, or after one year of service, by 9.3 percent. The current increase is only 4.56 percent. Two, provide an across-the-board pay raise. Three, provide compression raises.

Even with these actions, there will still be a reluctance to enter the profession which will not be completely solved by increasing compensation. For instance, the one to 1,500 ratio provided for in § 15.2-1609.1 of the Code of Virginia, which provides for minimum state funding for law enforcement deputy sheriff positions, was fully funded in 1994 when it was first introduced and subsequently funded every biennium until 2008, but has not been funded since that time. Currently, at a statewide level there is a shortage of approximately 243 positions for law enforcement deputy sheriffs based upon this statutory ratio. The problem is worse in the fastest growing counties, who have the fewest personnel compared to the standard. If shortages of deputies also serving courts and the jails are also included, the overall shortage totals approximately 970 positions statewide.

### **Statement of the Virginia Association of Regional Jails**

Presently, there are 22 regional jails across 80 counties, cities, and towns, which serve a total of 3.7 million citizens.

Virginia's regional jails, like all public safety agencies, compete to recruit and retain quality applicants and employees. In fact, in a significant number of cases, regional jails provide many of the applicants that accept law enforcement positions, and it is in regional jails that many law enforcement officers get their "basic training." Regional jails have lost hundreds of qualified and talented employees to local law enforcement agencies over the past ten years. As a result, certain jails lack sufficient staff, resulting in duties that are designed for four people being provided by one person.

This shared recruitment and retention dynamic is compounded by the fact that Virginia is a very diverse employment space, with multiple labor markets and varying degrees of resources and scale. Many localities lack the resources to significantly supplement Compensation Board minimum salaries. Local economic, demographic, and geographic hurdles present considerable challenges to recruitment and retention. Localities that appear rural are in fact affected by more urban or populous localities who share the same labor market.

To address this situation, the Virginia Association of Regional Jails believes that absolute pay equity needs to be an integral part of any proposed or actualized compensation plan. One part of the public safety system is not more important than another. Every facet contributes to public safety equally and should be paid equally. The Association therefore recommends that those disparities be equalized by taking certain steps to address them.

First, "indirect" costs associated with training a new employee should be included in any funding formula. While it varies from jail to jail, each facility incurs considerable expense to achieve that level of performance. It takes about 600 hours (over 25 percent) of an officer's first year of employment to certify him or her to meet state training standards. Second, salary compression needs to be treated as a fundamental issue that if not addressed will only exacerbate existing structural problems, whereby recruitment problems lead to retention problems that encompass the entire agency. Third, a statewide staffing survey should be initiated to support and undergird a comprehensive salary study; both the number of staff, and the compensation provided, should be assessed. There may be a finite number of people willing to work in law enforcement, and if this is not accounted for then the result will be a bidding war for employees. In many instances, jails that lack positions are authorized by the Compensation Board to have those positions, but they are completely funded by the locality and not the State.

### **Statement of the Virginia Law Enforcement Sheriffs**

The Virginia Law Enforcement Sheriffs (VLES) represents sheriffs, deputies, and support staff responsible for providing the primary law enforcement services in 86 Virginia localities.

As noted above, there are three different types of deputy sheriffs: court services ("CS") deputies, correctional ("C") deputies, and law enforcement ("LE") deputies. CS and C deputies primarily interact with pre-screened individuals in controlled environments, serve process, or maintain order in courtrooms. In contrast, LE deputies provide the primary law enforcement in their communities,

typically in rural areas of Virginia. They patrol their jurisdictions, answer calls, and handle encounters involving armed felons, domestic disputes, or crimes in progress; many of these activities are often conducted alone. LE deputies also serve search warrants and emergency custody orders, many of which involve potentially dangerous individuals. There is also a significant difference in training required to become a LE deputy. LE deputies must successfully complete the law enforcement state certification exam and 100 hours of law enforcement field training. CS and C deputies, on the other hand, are not required to pass this exam, nor to complete the required law enforcement field training.

Yet, despite the differences in duties and training, all deputies are compensated the same by the Commonwealth. The starting salary for state-supported deputy sheriffs is \$35,149 per year. Because of the low pay, sheriffs' offices, particularly in rural areas of the state, struggle to recruit and retain qualified deputies. Turnover among sheriffs' deputies exceeds 16 percent. For LE deputies, specifically, the turnover rate is even more acute, exceeding 27 percent. The high turnover rate is most often attributed to low pay.

VLES recommends a more equitable compensation structure within the classifications of deputy sheriffs, reflecting the differences in training and inherent risk associated within each classification. Compensation for the Department of State Police (VSP) clearly provides the benchmark for public safety officers across the Commonwealth. Recent legislative actions raised the starting salary of troopers, including a regional pay adjustment for troopers in Northern Virginia. In contrast, the starting salary for state-supported deputy sheriffs now lags a trooper's starting salary by at least 26 percent. The disparity in compensation between VSP and other public safety officers has been increased by the authorization of one-time bonuses for troopers for hazard pay, compression, new hire sign-on bonuses, and retention bonuses. Deputy sheriffs and corrections officers, on the other hand, received a lower one-time hazard pay bonus, and there was no corresponding compression bonus.

Regarding localities' ability to supplement deputies' salaries, VLES proposes to adopt the approach offered in HB 1302 (2020 General Assembly session). The bill effectively set the minimum salary for deputy sheriffs at \$40,000 per year, and provided that in any locality designated as "high" or "above average" according to the Commission on Local Government's Fiscal Stress Index as of July 1st of that year, the Commonwealth shall pay the entire sum of the difference between the current salary paid in such locality and the Compensation Board minimum plus the 20 percent supplement. This methodology would reduce both the fiscal burden to the state and avoid passing along unfunded mandates to those localities in fiscal distress. Consideration should also be given to adjusting the 1 to 1,500 ratio to account for the geographic size of the locality, such as one deputy for every 100 square miles; a larger geographic area can hinder response time and coverage compared to a locality with an equivalent population.

### **Recent Compensation Adjustments for Virginia Law Enforcement**

Looking at state employees generally, investments in employee compensation have increased in recent years but have lagged inflation overall. For public safety officers in particular, targeted compensation actions have been used to address acute workforce issues (Table 7).

FY	State Police	Corrections / Juvenile Justice	Sheriffs / Reg. Jails
2014	\$70/yr. of service	\$65/yr. of service	
2016	\$80/yr. of service ^	\$65/yr. of service + \$1,000 annual salary adj.	4.63% increase for entry-level sworn personnel
2018	\$6,793 for all sworn positions, which raised starting pay to \$43,000		\$80/yr. of service (sworn) \$65/yr. of service (other)
2019		Special increases for distressed roles: \$2,016 (CO) \$1,846 (Senior Officers)	Increased starting pay by \$871 (sheriffs)
2021	\$500 one-time bonus	\$500 one-time bonus	\$500 one-time bonus
2022	3% salary increase \$100/yr. of service \$5,000 bonus \$2,000 retention as needed	\$1,000 bonus \$3,000 bonus	Increased starting pay by \$871 (Reg. Jails) \$3,000 bonus (both)
^ Additional \$3.7 million to address compression			

As a result of the pay actions in Table 7, state-funded starting pay has grown moderately over the last 11 years (Table 8).

Starting Pay	State Police	DOC	Sheriffs / Reg. Jails
July 2009	\$35,497	\$27,485	\$28,234
July 2014	\$36,207	\$28,035	\$29,081
July 2021	\$47,833	\$35,064	\$35,149
Annualized Rate of Growth: 2009 –2014	0.40 %	0.40 %	0.59 %
Annualized Rate of Growth: 2014 –2021	4.75 %	3.80 %	3.21 %

As part of the workgroup’s review, a benchmarking exercise was performed to assess the amount of variation between state and local public safety officials, as well as related employers. The specific approaches were as follows:

- For VSP, salaries were compared to police departments in the Richmond area local, and in other states.
- For VADOC, salaries were compared to VSP, jails in Virginia, juvenile justice facilities in Virginia, and federal prisons.
- For Sheriffs and regional jails, salaries were compared to VSP, jails in Virginia, and VADOC correctional officers.

The results are shown in Table 9, which indicates that there is a wide degree of variation when salaries are compared to benchmarks, but that for many positions the salaries are lower than their benchmark.

Table 9			
	State Police	DOC	Sheriffs / Reg. Jails
<b>Current Salary</b>	\$47,833	\$35,064 (min.) \$40,100 (avg.)	\$35,149 (CB min.) \$43,544 (min + median suppl.) ^
<b>Benchmark</b>	\$48,767 (local avg.) \$62,516 (other states avg.)	\$45,214 (avg.) \$49,500 (median)	\$35,064 (DOC) up to \$47,833 (VSP)
<b>Difference</b>	-2% to -31%	-23 % (both)	+0.2% to -36% (using CB min.) +20% to -9.6% (min. + suppl.)
^ (\$35,149 Compensation Board minimum + \$8,395 local supplement median)			

To evaluate salary compression, the workgroup reviewed available information for VSP and VADOC; presently, no comparable information is available for sheriffs and regional jails. Available data indicate:

- For VSP, 10 percent of staff earn more than their supervisor, while the pay of sworn employees of the same rank and tenure can vary by up to 37 percent.
- For VADOC, the degree of vertical compression is indicated by the amount of separation between employees at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile (\$38,214) and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (\$41,974), which equates to a difference of 9.4% (\$3,580).

### Recommendations

The workgroup received and considered the proposals offered by the participants and other stakeholders. Generally speaking, the proposals address needs identified by the respective agencies but share many elements in common. These reflect concerns that the current salary levels for both entry-level and senior staff are not sufficient to recruit and retain personnel, particularly if the pool of qualified applicants is declining. There is a widespread concern about the effects of salary compression, which affects employees outside of public safety but which may be made more acute because of disparate salary actions in this area.

There is also a growing recognition that the agency-specific approach to personnel issues may be less effective and potentially more costly than a more systematic approach. Although each individual agency is responsible for fulfilling its mission and duties, cross-agency and inter-jurisdictional competition may hinder the Commonwealth's overall approach to public safety. Unlike some state employees, state-funded local employees do not receive regional salary adjustments. Similarly, declining state support for constitutional officers may undermine the independence of constitutional officers if they become too reliant upon local government funding.

In recognition of the concerns expressed by the individual agencies and stakeholders, and in recognition of the need to consider statewide and systemic effects, the workgroup recommends the following options for consideration by the Governor and General Assembly. In recognition of the limited amount of time available to assess the compensation structure across several agencies at both the state and

local levels, the work group has identified several areas that deserve additional study in order to determine the most effective approaches.

Recommendation 1: Study the individual personnel needs of state and local public safety agencies to determine the number of personnel that are needed in each state-funded role, the extent to which those positions are filled, and the degree of turnover. This analysis should also assess the size and qualifications of the available workforce and the degree to which they are employed in other sectors.

Recommendation 2: Comprehensively examine the current amount and sources of funding, and assess whether policy changes are warranted to address regional cost of living differentials.

Recommendation 3: Determine the degree to which salary scales and career ladders may need to be adjusted in a comprehensive manner to address inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional competition.

Recommendation 4: Analyze the overall needs of the combined state and local system of public safety, and determine if any planning or programmatic changes are needed, including consistent reporting mechanisms, performance measures, benchmarking procedures, and data elements, to ensure that all parts of the system are working effectively.





