

REPORT OF THE

**Joint Committee to Study Staffing
Levels, Rates of Staff Turnover,
Employment Conditions, Employee
Health and Safety, and Employee
Compensation at the Virginia
Department of Corrections
(HJR 522, 2021 SSI)**

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA



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**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
2022**

FINAL REPORT

House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions and House Committee on
Public Safety

Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services
and Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Joint Committee to Study Staffing Levels, Rates of Staff Turnover, Employment
Conditions, Employee Health and Safety, and Employee Compensation at the
Virginia Department of Corrections. (HJ 522, 2021 Special Session I)

MEMBERS

Legislative Members:

The Honorable Patrick A. Hope, Chair
The Honorable Jennifer B. Boysko, Vice Chair
The Honorable Kaye Kory
The Honorable Marcia S. Price
The Honorable Clinton L. Jenkins
The Honorable Joseph D. Morrissey

Citizen Members:

Donald Baylor
David Beckles
Rebecca Griffin
Quinton Riddick

Staff:

Charles Quagliato, Section Manager, Division of Legislative Services
David May, Senior Attorney, Division of Legislative Services
Taylor Mey, Staff Attorney, Division of Legislative Services
Cheryl Wilson, Deputy Clerk, House Committee Operations

WEBSITE

<https://studies.viriniageneralassembly.gov/studies/545>

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to House Joint Resolution 29 (2020), the Joint Committee of the House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions; the House Committee on Public Safety; the Senate Committee on the Judiciary; and the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services Studying Staffing Levels, Employment Conditions, and Compensation at the Virginia Department of Corrections was established. The Joint Committee and was scheduled to complete its meetings November 30, 2020, but was unable to meet during the 2020 interim due to complications related to COVID-19 and the 2020 Special Session, so the Joint Committee was continued during the 2021 Special Session I by House Joint Resolution 522 (2021 Special Session I).

The Joint Committee held four meetings during the 2021 interim. The following is a summary of the Joint Committee's meetings and recommendations.

MEETINGS

Wednesday, August 25, 2021: Pocahontas Building

Presentation: The staffing levels, rates of staff turnover, employment conditions, employee health and safety, and employee compensation at the Department of Corrections - Harold W. Clarke, Director, Department of Corrections

Via PowerPoint presentation, Harold Clarke gave an overview of some of the employment challenges the Department of Corrections is currently facing. Mr. Clarke discussed the issues with employee turnover, employment working conditions, lagging salaries, and salary compression that have made it difficult to retain existing staff and attract new staff at the Department of Corrections. Mr. Clarke provided the Joint Committee with a series of recommendations, including increasing the starting salary for correctional officers and probation and parole officers, and making corresponding salary increases for current Department of Corrections staff.

Tuesday, October 19, 2021: Pocahontas Building

Presentation: Correctional Workforce Challenges - Charles J. Kehoe, Chief Operating Officer, Kehoe Correctional Consulting, LLC

Charles Kehoe gave some prepared remarks on the challenges facing correctional workforces. Mr. Kehoe's remarks focused on the issues other states are facing and how such issues are being addressed.

Presentation: Overview of Appropriations Process - David Reynolds, Legislative Fiscal Analyst, House Appropriations Committee

Via PowerPoint presentation, David Reynolds gave an overview of the appropriations process with a particular focus on appropriations for the Commonwealth's public safety agencies.

Tuesday, November 9, 2021: Pocahontas Building

Presentation: Review of Report on Compensation in State Government - Natalie Brannon, Director, Compensation and Workforce Analytics, Human Resources Consulting Services, Department of Human Resource Management

Via PowerPoint presentation, Natalie Brannon gave a presentation on the biannual report on compensation in state government. Ms. Brannon's report focused on the Department of Corrections and confirmed that salary levels for several occupations at the Department of Corrections were less than the market rate.

Presentation: Responses to Department of Corrections Employee Survey - Charles Quagliato, Section Manager, Division of Legislative Services

Charles Quagliato presented an overview of the responses from the Department of Corrections employee survey. Previously, the Joint Committee emailed a survey asking questions related to employee job satisfaction, working conditions, and other employment related issues to the over 12,000 Department of Corrections employees. The responses to the survey were collected in an aggregate format and presented to the Joint Committee.

Tuesday, November 23, 2021: Pocahontas Building

Presentation: Review of the Department of Corrections Compensation Study Findings - Michael Jay, Legislative Fiscal Analyst, House Appropriations Committee Staff

Via PowerPoint presentation, Michael Jay reviewed the findings from the Department of Corrections Compensation Study. The workgroup was authorized in Chapter 1 of 2021 Special Session II to address compensation for correctional officers, deputy sheriffs, and regional jail officers. The workgroup was established, along with the workgroup evaluating state police compensation, in response to a significant increase in turnover and vacancies in public safety agencies since the pandemic. Mr. Jay reviewed some of the factors contributing to the increase in turnover and vacancies faced by the Department of Corrections. He reviewed the starting pay for correctional officers over the last decade and the dramatic increase in vacancies the Department of Corrections has faced since May 2020. He also presented that the Department of Corrections facilities are also facing a shortage of experienced staff with 24% of security staff having 2 years or less of experience and almost 45% having less than 5 years of experience and that they are receiving less applications for employment. Mr. Jay presented on the workgroup's recommendation regarding compensation changes for the Department of Corrections which would increase starting pay for correctional officers, provide a compression adjustment for current staff, and also create a career progression ladder.

Presentation: Recommendations for 2022 Session - Taylor Mey, Attorney, Division of Legislative Services

Via PowerPoint presentation, Taylor Mey reviewed the potential recommendations for the Joint Committee to vote on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Committee members voted to adopt the following recommendations:

- 1. Increase salaries for correctional officers and probation and parole officers as proposed by Director Clarke in the presentation he gave the Joint Committee at the August 25, 2021, meeting and to take cost of living into consideration when providing such salary increases.**
 - Director Clarke's presentation included the following recommendations for salary increases:
 - 1) Increase the starting salary for correctional officers from \$35,064 to \$44,000 and to increase the salaries for supervisors accordingly;
 - 2) Create a career progression ladder for correctional officers and supervisors;
 - 3) Address salary compression for correctional officers and supervisors; and
 - 4) Increase the starting salary for probation and parole officers from \$39,628 to \$45,000 and to increase the salaries for supervisors accordingly.

- 2. Provide \$3,000 bonuses for all employees of the Department of Corrections to be included in the "caboose" Budget Bill or any vehicle that may go into effect earlier.**
 - The Joint Committee recommended providing \$3,000 bonuses to *all* employees of the Department of Corrections and that such bonuses should be included in the "caboose" Budget Bill or any vehicle that may go into effect earlier in order to get the bonuses to such employees during the period before the proposed salary increases would go into effect.

- 3. Recommend the intent and concept in Delegate Hope's HB 2325 from the 2021 session.**
 - Delegate Hope introduced HB 2325 during the 2021 session which would have created the Office of the Department of Corrections Ombudsman. The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security was required to assess the need for, potential benefits and feasibility of implementing, and staffing and other associated costs of establishing an Office of the Ombudsman within the Department of Corrections and to develop a report of the findings and provide such report detailing the findings to the Chairs of the House Public Safety, House Appropriations, Senate Judiciary, and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees no later than December 1, 2021.
 - The Joint Committee recommended the intent and concept of creating such office within the Department of Corrections in Delegate Hope's HB 2325.

- 4. Continue the Joint Committee generally for another year.**

Wednesday, December 15, 2021: Sussex II State Prison

The Joint Committee visited Sussex II State Prison. It was not a public meeting and no public business was discussed.

**Additional information about the Joint Committee's study of staffing levels and employment conditions at the Department of Corrections can be found on the Virginia General Assembly's website at: <https://studies.virginiageneralassembly.gov/studies/545>*

