

California State Assembly



Informational Hearing Agenda

Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 6 on Public Safety

Assemblymember James Ramos, Chair

Monday, April 7, 2025
2:30 P.M. – State Capitol, Room 447

Items To Be Heard		
Item	Description	Page
5225 0552	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Office of Inspector General	2
Issue	1. Sexual Abuse in CDCR Women's Prisons and Related Budget Proposal	2
5225	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation	7
Issue	2. Rehabilitative/Reentry Programs in California's Women's Prisons	7
	3. Revised Staff Complaint Process	11
	4. Various Budget Proposals	13

Public Comment will be taken in person after the completion of all panels and any discussion from the Members of the Subcommittee.

Items To Be Heard

5225 – California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation 0552 – Office of Inspector General

Issue 1: Sexual Abuse in CDCR Women's Prisons and Related Budget Proposal

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and panelists will discuss the issue of sexual abuse in the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) and the California Institution for Women (CIW). The Subcommittee has provided two handouts, available on the Assembly Budget Committee's website: Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Report to the Legislature submitted by CDCR and the executive summary of the CA Women's Prisons—Sexual Abuse Response and Prevention Working Group Community Report to the Legislature.

The Office of Inspector General will provide an overview of their office and their budget proposal related to oversight of sexual abuse investigations.

Panel

- Anissa De La Cruz, Warden, Central California Women's Facility, CDCR
- Lavelle Parker, Acting Warden, California Institution for Women, CDCR
- Amika Mota, Executive Director, Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition
- Sol Mercado, Reentry Coordinator, Planting Justice
- Amarik Singh, Inspector General, Office of the Inspector General
- Shaun Spillane, Chief Deputy Inspector General, Office of the Inspector General

The Department of Finance and Legislative Analyst's Office are available for any questions from the Subcommittee.

Background

There are more than 1.2 million women who are in detention or under supervision of the criminal justice system in the United States on any given day.¹ Since the mid-1980s, women are the fastest growing segment of the incarcerated population (double the rate of men) according to the ACLU. Statistics paint a bleak picture of the victimization of women prior to even entering the justice system. Human Rights Watch estimates that at least half of all incarcerated women have experienced sexual abuse prior to entering detention while the ACLU estimates that 92% of women in California's prisons have been battered and abused in their lifetimes. Prior abuse makes the women who enter the justice system significantly more vulnerable to abuse while incarcerated.² Data reported by the U.S. Department of Justice indicated between 2009 and 2011, women made up 7% of the total federal prison population but accounted for 33% of staff

¹ <https://www.aclu.org/issues/prisoners-rights/women-prison>

² U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Women in Prison: Seeking Justice Behind Bars* (February 2020), <https://www.usccr.gov/files/pubs/2020/02-26-Women-in-Prison.pdf>.

on incarcerated person victims.³ The budget proposal from the Office of Inspector General (discussed below) indicates there are approximately 1,400 complaints related to sexual abuse and harassment filed annually by incarcerated persons in all of CDCR's male and female prisons.

Federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and California Sexual Abuse in Detention Elimination Act (SADEA). PREA, a bi-partisan effort supported by a broad base of stakeholders representing civil rights, faith based, and health organizations, was signed into law in 2003, which aimed to address sexual assault in detention settings by adopting a zero tolerance policy, developing national standards, supporting research and data collection, and providing funding for training detention staff. SADEA, (Chapter 303, Statutes of 2005) enacted a number of provisions aimed to protect incarcerated individuals in CDCR against sexual abuse, including requiring CDCR to adopt policies and protocols related to the placement of individuals by accounting for certain risk factors that may make someone a target for sexual abuse, the provision of safe housing for someone who alleges they have been a victim of sexual abuse, the prohibition of retaliation against someone who files a complaint, etc.

In addition, regulations specify that the legal concept of consent does not exist between CDCR staff and incarcerated individuals, and that any sexual behavior between them constitutes sexual misconduct and will subject the employee to disciplinary action and/or to prosecution.

U.S. Department of Justice Investigation. In September 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice opened a civil rights investigation into sexual abuse by staff at both CCWF and CIW, citing hundreds of lawsuits alleging officer sexual abuse at both prisons. The press release from the U.S. DOJ further stated the following:

- Women have filed hundreds of private lawsuits in the past two years alleging officer sexual abuse of people incarcerated at the Central California Women's Facility over the last decade, ranging from allegations of inappropriate groping during searches and genital rubbing to forcible rape.
- This week in state court, a trial is scheduled to begin involving allegations that a former correctional officer at the Central California Women's Facility engaged in widespread sexual assaults.
- A civil lawsuit was filed on behalf of 21 women incarcerated at the California Institution for Women and included allegations of forcible rape and penetration, groping, oral copulation, as well as threats of violence and punishment with abusive conduct ranging from 2014 to 2020.
- Correctional staff at both facilities reportedly sought sexual favors in return for contraband and privileges.

³ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Sexual Victimization Reported by Adult Correctional Authorities, 2009-2011. January 2014

- The correctional officers named in these allegations range in rank and have included the very people responsible for handling complaints of sexual abuse made by women incarcerated at these facilities.

Recent High Profile Sexual Abuse Cases. In January of 2025, the CCWF case referenced in the press release above resulted in 59 felony and 6 misdemeanor convictions for sexual abuse committed by one correctional officer, who had been employed with CDCR for 27 years. The convictions included rape, rape under the color of authority, oral copulation, sexual penetration, and sodomy. Records indicate that sexual abuse committed by this correctional officer was first reported in 2014 and interviews conducted by the Guardian suggest that other victims never came forward out of fear of retaliation.⁴

A class action lawsuit was filed against a staff gynecologist at CIW in February 2025 for sexual abuse allegations that occurred between 2016 and 2023. The suit also alleges that CIW had first received complaints of misconduct by this gynecologist in 2017. In a separate federal lawsuit in 2021, two incarcerated women in CIW were used as “bait” to catch a correctional officer engaged in sexual misconduct during a sting operation conducted by other correctional officers. During the operation, the women were assaulted again as the investigators failed to intervene and did not stop the attacks.⁵ The correctional officer was eventually fired after a lengthy investigation and he received a 2 year suspended prison sentence and 3 years of probation in 2018.⁶

Barriers to Reporting Sexual Abuse. Fear of retaliation is a common impediment for victims coming forward to report sexual abuse and harassment, likely leading to significant underreporting. Recently, a federal lawsuit was filed by 13 women incarcerated in CCWF who allege that on August 2, 2024, a number of correctional officers attacked them with pepper spray and rubber bullets in retaliation after they filed sexual abuse claims. The federal lawsuit alleges that a sergeant who is the leader of a correctional officer prison gang known as the “Delta Dogs” led the violent assault against 159 women in one housing unit. Threats were made against the incarcerated women to stop submitting reports of sexual abuse or privileges would be taken away, the unit would be placed on lockdown, personal property would be thrown away, etc. The sergeant and another correctional officer involved have been subsequently moved to another prison but it is unclear whether further disciplinary action has been taken.

For incarcerated women who file complaints, they may send a complaint to the Office of Inspector General or use CDCR’s internal grievance process that handles allegations of staff misconduct. CDCR’s staff complaint process, as discussed in Issue 3 of this agenda, has gone through several iterations to refine the process and to address concerns of volume of complaints and bias where fellow officers have conducted the investigations of their peers. Incarcerated women that have filed complaints have shared being placed in segregated housing in a punitive manner, receiving a rules violation report that may impact their release date, and being pressured to rescind their complaints or participation in class action litigation.

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/oct/25/gregory-rodriguez-california-correctional-officer-accused-sexual-assault-womens-prison>

⁵ <https://www.dailybulletin.com/2021/05/05/2-female-inmates-allege-they-were-used-as-bait-to-catch-predatory-guard-at-chino-prison/>

⁶ <https://www.dailybulletin.com/2021/05/05/2-female-inmates-allege-they-were-used-as-bait-to-catch-predatory-guard-at-chino-prison/>

Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Working Group and Ambassador Program. The 2023 Budget Act included 1) \$1 million⁷ to establish a Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Working Group and Ambassador Program for CDCR to work in partnership with Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition and 2) required CDCR to submit a report to the Legislature by March 1, 2024, regarding the following issues:

- (1) Protections for sexual assault and harassment whistleblowers inside prisons or otherwise in CDCR's custody;
- (2) Access to trauma informed support services for incarcerated victims/survivors; and
- (3) The process for handling allegations of staff misconduct that specifically involve allegations of sexual assault and harassment.

The respective reports submitted by CDCR and the workgroup, available as handouts, provide information related to adopted policies and policy recommendations to curb and address the prevalence of sexual abuse in the prisons.

Governor's Budget Proposal

The Governor's Budget proposes \$3.6 million General Fund and 22 positions in 2025-26, and \$5,715,000 and 29 positions in 2026-2027 and ongoing, to support implementation of Chapter 1012, Statutes of 2024 (SB 1069), which authorizes the OIG to monitor and, under certain circumstances, investigate allegations of staff sexual misconduct with an incarcerated person at CDCR. The OIG anticipates the additional positions requested will enable them to increase their monitoring from approximately 30 CDCR staff sexual misconduct investigations per year to approximately 350 staff sexual misconduct investigations per year. At this rate, the OIG projects that it will monitor approximately 25% of the current volume of all staff sexual misconduct cases within CDCR that involve incarcerated people (approximately 1,400 total claims annually). SB 1069 authorizes the OIG to monitor, and in certain cases, investigate, allegations of staff sexual misconduct with an incarcerated person. The OIG will report on its oversight of staff sexual misconduct investigations and will expand its review of grievances and allegations submitted to CDCR's Centralized Screening Team (CST), to enable the OIG to have greater visibility on the complaints that the CST decides not to refer for investigation. The OIG plans to monitor approximately 9,600 more grievance decisions per year.

Staff Note. The Administration reports proposed resources for SB 1069 implementation was developed based on CDCR's old process for handling allegations that existed before the January 1, 2025 change (discussed below). Accordingly, OIG may need a different level and/or type of resources to implement SB 1069 under the new process. In addition, the new process could affect the level and/or type of resources needed in both CDCR and OIG's base budgets. The Administration indicates it intends to conduct a review this spring of resource needs for both departments to align their operations with the new process.

⁷ The 2024 Budget Act included an additional \$500,000 to continue this work.

Staff Comments

The Subcommittee is in receipt of several accounts of sexual abuse and harassment that were submitted anonymously by currently and formerly incarcerated women who are fearful of reprisal. In their accounts, they spoke of almost daily harassment from certain correctional officers ranging from lewd comments, to watching them shower, to hands on sexual abuse. Despite efforts to change housing and work assignments to get away from the abuse, their abusers would follow them at every step. Other correctional officers sometimes warned them of particular predatory officers but did little else to hold their colleagues accountable or protect the women. Some women spoke of the complaint process as being unclear and inconsistently administered. For example, some were not provided victim advocates during their reporting which they were entitled. Complainants who came forward generally did not feel safer, and often faced negative consequences for coming forward. Others who filed complaints spoke of losing work assignments and other privileges, and having disciplinary write ups, which can delay their release date and negatively impacting their parole readiness hearings. Finally, all who shared their accounts spoke of their abusers being allowed to remain in the prisons (moving from one area to another area), with little to no accountability for their actions.

The Subcommittee has also received a letter from Just Detention International (JDI), a health and human rights organization whose mission is to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention. They have worked with CDCR in the past and currently on providing group counseling services and emotional support groups for survivors of trauma. JDI points to the need for additional services and programming similar to services provided by community based rape crisis centers. Currently, these types of programs are not sufficiently funded, leaving many incarcerated women's sexual abuse and trauma unaddressed.

Staff Recommendation: Hold Open.

5225 – California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Issue 2: Rehabilitation/Reentry Programs in California's Women's Prisons

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and invited panelists will provide an overview of various rehabilitation programs provided in California's Women's Prisons.

A factsheet is provided by Unapologetically HERS on recent research conducted inside CCWF entitled: Empowered From Within: Peer Research on Job Readiness and is available on the Assembly Budget website.

Panel

- Amy Casias, Division of Rehabilitative Programs, CDCR
- Anissa De La Cruz, Warden, Central California Women's Facility, CDCR
- Lavelle Parker, Acting Warden, California Institution for Women, CDCR
- Precious Johnson, Prison Reform Advocate & Reentry Consultant
- Norhan Abolail, Advocacy Manager, Transformative Programming Works

The Department of Finance and Legislative Analyst's Office are available for any questions from the Subcommittee.

Background

California's Women's Prisons. Of CDCR's 31 prisons, two of the prisons house incarcerated women: California Institution for Women (CIW) in Corona and Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) in Chowchilla. Of the total 90,832 prison population (as of March 19, 2025), 3,658 or 4% of the total population are female. Both prisons are currently operating at below the court ordered population cap of 137.5%: CIW is 96.6% and CCWF is 101.8%. The racial/ethnic⁸ and age breakdown⁹ of the incarcerated female population is as follows:

Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percentage	Overall Share of State Female Population ¹⁰
Hispanic or Mexican, or Cuban	1,307	35.82%	41%
White	1,155	31.65%	31%
Black or Jamaican	898	24.61%	5%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	83	2.27%	<1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	80	2.19%	17%
Other	126	3.45%	5%

⁸ As of February 28, 2025 and includes incarcerated persons with a gender identity of female.

⁹ As of February 28, 2025 and includes incarcerated persons with a gender identity of female.

¹⁰ <https://www.kff.org/interactive/womens-health-profiles/california/demographics/>

Age Group	Count	Percentage
18-29	642	17.6%
30-44	1,909	52.31%
45-64	922	25.26%
65-94	176	4.82%

Programming. CDCR provides a variety of programming for the incarcerated population. Specifically, the women's prisons offer the following rehabilitative and reentry programs:

Program Type	CCWF Current Enrolled	CIW Current Enrolled
Adult Basic Education	180	133
Alternative Academic Education	78	33
Cognitive Behavioral Interventions (CBI) - Life Skills	227	99
CBI - Outpatient	141	117
CBI Aftercare Program	37	86
College AA/AS Degree	331	142
College BA/BS Degree	28	22
College MA/MS Degree	1	7
Developmental Disabled Program	6	0
Disability Placement Program	1	0
eLearning	89	63
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	10	0
General Education Development	89	125
High School	8	7
Literacy Mentors-Training	3	2
Occupational Mentor Certification Program (OMCP) Certified Mentor	9	12
OMCP Mentor Trainee	16	0
Peer Literacy Mentor Program Students	190	66
Transitions	148	42
Vocational: Building Maintenance	25	0
Vocational: Career Core	0	9
Vocational: Computer & Related Technology	161	87
Vocational: Cosmetology	27	25

In recent years, CDCR has expanded higher education opportunities across all of its prisons. CDCR partners with local community colleges and correspondence/distance institutions to provide higher education inside CIW and CCWF. CDCR provided the following additional information for each of the two prisons regarding higher education enrollment:

CCWF¹¹

Fall 2024 total number of college students: 396

Spring 2025 total number of college students: 384

Local face-to-face associate degree partner: Merced College (350-360 students each semester)

Correspondence/distance colleges: Coastline College, Feather River College, Lassen College

Bachelor's Degree partner: Fresno State (Social Science B.A. program), one cohort of 27

CIW¹²

Fall 2024 total number of college students: 183

Spring 2025 total number of college students: 197

Local face-to-face associate degree partner: Chaffey College (60-65 students each semester)

Correspondence/distance colleges: Coastline College, Feather River College, Palo Verde College

Bachelor's Degree partner: Cal State LA (Liberal Studies B.A. program), one cohort of 22 students

A small portion of CDCR's overall \$14 billion budget is provided for rehabilitative programming and an even smaller percentage of the budget supports programs provided by community based organizations. Two grant programs, the CARE grant (\$5 million annually on an ongoing basis since the 2019 Budget Act) and the RIGHT grant (limited term funding of \$20 million in the 2021 and 2023 Budget Acts and \$2.2 million in the 2024 Budget Act) were championed by the Legislature to support the work of approximately 100 community based organizations to provide in-prison programming, including restorative justice programs and programs aimed at addressing root causes of violent behavior. Approximately 35% of the RIGHT grant recipients provide programming inside the women's prisons. In addition, CDCR administers the Innovative Programming Grants (IPG) program which is funded through the Inmate Welfare Fund. A request for applications recently closed for the IPG which will provide \$4 million for each of the following fiscal years 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28

Staff Comment. The Subcommittee is in receipt of written testimony submitted by a member of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP) which in part reads:

I am formerly incarcerated and was released on January 22, 2023 after serving 10 and a half years. At the time I began serving my sentence there was no incentive for people serving determinate sentences (those with a parole date) to engage in vocational training or fire service. Therefore, not many people actively sought education or placement in these programs until the passing of Prop 57, which allowed everyone the opportunity to receive milestone credits. I tried to enroll in as many vocations as possible and this is when I learned that the vocations offered urgently need restructuring to allow us the opportunity to be up to date and employable upon release. Also, due to constant staffing issues it was nearly impossible to complete a vocation. Vocational class often takes anywhere from 6 months to a year to complete.

¹¹ Some students take a combination of face to face and correspondence classes.

¹² Some students take a combination of face to face and correspondence classes.

I started with Computer Literacy which involved us reading very outdated texts about computers ourselves and taking quizzes that no one graded. The programs were older than the ones I used prior to entering prison in 2013. Unfortunately, my teacher sustained a knee injury two months into the class and 35 students were displaced and this class remained closed for a year. I then was enrolled in Building Maintenance. The beginning of this class involved reading materials yourself and taking timed tests on the computer of the information provided. Again, after one month this program was discontinued as the teacher went out on disability and has not yet returned. Cosmetology was in high demand, but if you have a violent conviction, which many women have, we were told we could take the class but not earn our license. I entered the fire program which taught us wildland and structural firefighting skills. However, we were unable to earn the Firefighter 1 certification that would allow us to be employed as a firefighter. While the new Coding and Audio/Visual Programs brought in by the Last Mile are huge successes, unfortunately, these are just two classes that start in cohorts. Therefore I urge you to look at what is offered as a vocation, see if it is still relevant, and if not—replace it with something else that is. Furthermore, every vocation should result in some sort of certification that can be placed on a resume that can be recognized in the free world. We want to be successful, we want to live a meaningful life upon release, but we need the tools to be able to do so.

Staff Recommendation: This is an informational item.

Issue 3: Revised Staff Complaint Process

CDCR will provide an overview of their update to the staff complaint process that includes changes as of January 1, 2025.

Panel

- David Chriss, Deputy Director of Internal Affairs, CDCR
- Cynthia Mendonza, Deputy Director of Office of Fiscal Services, CDCR
- Alyssa Cervantes, Department of Finance
- Kimberly Harbison, Department of Finance
- Caitlin O'Neil, Legislative Analyst's Office

Background

CDCR has been working on revising its staff complaint process for the last 5 years and has received 544 budgeted positions as well as \$64 million in one-time costs and \$102 million in ongoing costs to implement the staff grievance process, including the purchase of cameras. The impetus for this new staff complaint process was partially based on a 2019 report, released by the Office of Inspector General (OIG), regarding staff complaints at Salinas Valley State Prison. Findings in the report showed significant deficiencies in the existing staff complaints process, poor quality controls, and significant risk of bias. While the OIG report was specific to Salinas Valley, complaints from across the state indicated the problem was systemic. In addition, litigation was filed (*Armstrong v. Newsom*), resulting in two court orders on September 8, 2020, and March 11, 2021, where findings of systemic abuses were found against incarcerated people with disabilities in six prisons. The ordered remedy included the installation of security cameras, use of body-worn cameras, additional supervisory staffing, and a reformed staff complaint process. An expert had also been appointed to oversee the implementation of these measures.

In March 2022, CDCR finalized remedial plans which included overhauling their staff complaint process (at all prisons), installing fixed surveillance cameras (at all prisons), and implementing body-worn cameras at ten prisons. CDCR is also required to provide to the case expert and plaintiffs' attorneys with staff misconduct investigation files to be monitored and reviewed to confirm compliance with the remedial plans. CDCR adopted final regulations for the staff misconduct process on October 20, 2022. Since that time, CDCR has made adjustments to its regulations including the most recent changes that went into effect on January 1, 2025. Prior to January 1, the process worked as follows:

Intake, Screening, and Routing

1. Grievances are collected by the prison's Office of Grievances, and screened for any urgent issues (i.e. anything that would require an immediate response) within one business day.
2. Grievances are sent to the Centralized Screening Team (CST) at the Office of Internal Affairs (OIA) and processed within three to five business days. There, staff decide

whether it contains: (1) a serious allegation of staff misconduct that requires investigation by the Allegation Investigation Unit (AIU) at OIA (which includes allegations of sexual misconduct); (2) an allegation of staff misconduct that can be returned to the prison for a local inquiry; or (3) a routine grievance that does not contain any allegations of staff misconduct and can be returned to the prison. CST staff may also follow up with the person who submitted the grievance for more information if needed, and they log the grievance in the Allegation Against Staff Tracking System (AASTS).

Investigation, Inquiry or Other

3. Depending on the decision of CST, AIU will perform an investigation within 120 days, or a Locally Designated Investigator (LDI) will perform a local inquiry within 60 days. In the case of a local inquiry, the final report must be reviewed by an AIU Captain before the inquiry is completed. If the LDI establishes reasonable belief that an allegation occurred that is likely to lead to adverse action, the LDI is supposed to stop the inquiry and escalate the complaint directly to AIU. LDIs are also required to be at least one rank above the highest-ranking officer in the allegation.

Resolution

4. The results of the investigation or inquiry are returned to the hiring authority for review and disposition. The reports only contain a finding of facts – it is up to the hiring authority to decide if an allegation of staff misconduct is sustained. Hiring authorities must order some action if an allegation of staff misconduct is sustained. The outcome is recorded in the AASTS.

New Staff Misconduct Regulations Effective January 2025. Due to the volume of grievances received, CDCR modified the staff misconduct process through emergency regulations, effective January 1, 2025.

- Eliminates local inquiries. Grievances will now either go to OIA for investigation or are handled as a routine grievance through the institution (including lower-level allegations that will be returned to the institutions for routine inquiry).
- Establishes a new centralized hiring authority unit for the review and resolution of investigations conducted by AIU.
- Creates multi-disciplinary grievance teams to meet with individuals who frequently file grievances and help resolve their issues or open investigations.
- Enhances internal auditing to help ensure corrective and disciplinary actions are taken.

Staff Recommendation: This is an informational item.

Issue 4: Various Budget Proposals

The Department of Finance, CDCR, and Legislative Analyst's Office are available to answer any questions from the Subcommittee regarding the following non-presentation budget proposals.

1. San Quentin Rehabilitation Center: Rehabilitation Program Enhancements. The Governor's Budget proposes \$7.8 million General Fund and 33.6 positions in 2025-26, \$12.5 million General Fund and 73.7 positions in 2026-27, and \$13 million General Fund and 74.4 positions in 2027-28 and ongoing to continue the efforts of transforming San Quentin State Prison into the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center (SQRC, embodying the California Model. The 2023 Budget Act allocated \$20 million for SQRC to be used for preliminary plans, working drawings, and construction phases. In addition, CDCR was allocated \$239 million from Public Buildings Construction Funds (Lease Revenue Bond financing) for the pre-construction and design-build phases. The project includes improvements to various spaces and facilities within the SQRC campus, along with the construction of new learning center buildings. Construction is projected to be completed in January 2026. This request will provide staffing and programming upon completion of the improvement projects, moving to the next phase in the reimagining and repurposing project at SQRC.

The Legislative Analyst's Office raises the following key questions and recommendations:

Key Questions Remain Unanswered for the California Model as a Whole. Even after the administration develops a specific plan for SQRC, certain key questions will remain about the California Model as a whole. Without answers to these questions, it is difficult for the Legislature to provide oversight over the development and implementation of the California Model and evaluate any future funding requests.

- ***How Is Progression Through the Prison System Envisioned?*** Several of the activities being piloted under the California Model are targeted toward specific populations and environments within the prison system. However, the administration has not articulated how these various interventions fit together to motivate behavior change in a continuum through the prison system from admission to release. Without a clear theory of action, it is difficult to assess the overall logic of the activities being pursued under the California Model and to identify any potential gaps. For example, of the roughly 30,000 people released from prison annually, roughly half spend around a year or less in prison. A clear theory of action would articulate how the California Model would better serve this large group with short stays and what specific outcomes we might logically expect to see as a result.
- ***What Is the Role of SQRC in the Envisioned Progression?*** The ongoing construction and current request for operational funding at SQRC are substantially more costly than California Model activities being implemented at other prisons. Moreover, the administration has indicated an intention to single-cell SQRC, which would reduce the number of people that can otherwise be housed at the prison, thereby concentrating the richer resources at SQRC among an even smaller number of people. Given this resource intensity, the pilot project being developed at SQRC requires a higher level of scrutiny. In

particular, the administration should be able to articulate how SQRC fits into its overall theory of action for the entire prison system and why it would logically contribute to the administration's stated outcomes. For example, if the administration believes that access to single-celling and richer programming will motivate people at other prisons to make more positive choices in the hopes of being placed at SQRC, then it should explain how it believes this incentive would function. For example, how would people at other prisons learn of the benefits of SQRC? What are the intermediate positive steps and institutional responses that would mark someone's pathway to SQRC?

- ***How Would the Administration's Vision Be Implemented?*** After establishing a theory of action for how the California Model could logically lead to its stated goals, the administration should identify the key policy changes and additional budget capacity that it would need to implement this vision. For example, if the administration aims to offer single-celling more broadly throughout the prison system, then it would need to articulate a specific plan to either expand prison capacity (which could be very costly) or reduce the prison population sufficiently to achieve its desired level of single-celling. While it may be premature for the administration to know specific implementation details, it should be able to articulate the broad contours of a plan at this point. If it cannot do so, this raises concerns that the administration's vision is not feasible to implement. Moreover, even if the Legislature agrees with the administration's vision, it will want to ensure that it is comfortable with the steps and budgetary resources that would be required to achieve it. Given the multiyear deficits facing the state, it is particularly important that the Legislature understands the fiscal implications of the administration's plans so that it can weigh California Model activities against its other budget priorities.
- ***What Would Success Look Like?*** Based on its theory of action and high-level implementation plan, the administration should be able to articulate how it would know if the model is working as expected. Specifically, the department should be able to articulate how the metrics it is tracking would logically be affected by the California Model and how it would know if trends in those metrics are indeed caused by the California Model as opposed to other factors. For example, one goal could be to reduce violence at SQRC. However, simply measuring the number of violent incidents at SQRC before and after the pilot is implemented would not be a clear indicator of success because the department is planning to change the makeup of the population of the prison, which could affect violence levels independently of the other changes being developed. In contrast, if the administration believes that SQRC will help motivate positive behavior change throughout the system, then perhaps the degree to which people report actively working to earn transfer to SQRC and the number that are successfully transferring there from higher-level institutions could be an indicator of success.
- ***How Will Success Be Measured and Evaluated?*** After it has a clear sense of what success would look like under its theory of action, the administration should develop a detailed plan for measuring and evaluating whether success is being achieved. Such a plan would include a description of the specific data points and benchmarks that will be used to measure progress. To the extent certain needed data are not currently collected, the plan would identify how that data will be collected, including the instruments or

counting rules that will be used to gather it, the data systems that will be used to manage it, and the staff responsible for doing this. In addition, such a plan would identify who will evaluate data to assess if benchmarks are being met and report on the results. Given that the California Model touches on many areas of the department and has wide ranging goals, an evaluation plan may involve several components and entities. For example, it could make sense to contract with external researchers to survey staff and evaluate whether metrics of staff wellness are improving. In contrast, it could make sense for state entities that already play a role in oversight of CDCR—such as the Office of the Inspector General or the California State Auditor—to monitor implementation of or adherence to new policies.

Recommendations

- ***Approve Resources to Activate New Learning Center and Contract With AJCC.*** We recommend that the Legislature approve the portions of the request to activate the new Learning Center and contract with AJCC. This would allow existing programs at the prison to begin utilizing the space and for people preparing to reenter the community to receive career counseling and job placement services. This would be a total of \$3.2 million and 19.7 positions in 2025-26, growing annually to \$6.4 million and 40.8 positions by 2027-28.
- ***Reject Remaining Resources Unless Administration Is Able to Provide a Clear Plan for SQRC Justifying Them.*** In view of the above concerns, we recommend that the Legislature only approve the remainder of the request if the department is able to provide a complete action plan for SQRC that is consistent with legislative priorities and justifies the requested resources.
- ***Require Administration to Report on Key Unanswered Questions.*** We recommend that the Legislature adopt budget bill language requiring the administration to submit a report by January 10, 2026 that answers the key questions outlined above. We note that the Legislature may want to explicitly direct the department to engage with stakeholders as it develops answers to these questions. To the extent that the administration cannot fully answer these questions by January 10, 2026, the report should outline the process for and time frame in which the questions will be answered.

2. Suicide Watch Augmentation. The Governor's Budget proposes \$13.6 million General Fund in 2025-26 and ongoing to fund additional costs associated with increased suicide watch workload. Based on the average expenditures over the last four years, CDCR/CCHCS projects to spend \$31.2 million in 2024-25 and ongoing for health care staffing for suicide watch activities. CDCR/CCHCS have existing funding authority for \$3.8 million and have historically absorbed approximately \$9 million in costs for suicide watch activities. This request provides additional funding of \$13.6 million to fund the difference between CDCR/CCHCS' projected expenditures and base resources, assuming that CDCR/CCHCS will absorb approximately \$14 million annually for suicide watch functions, excluding custody staffing, which will continue to be absorbed by CDCR.

The Legislative Analyst's Office provides the following assessment and recommendations:

Proposed Funding May Be More Than Needed... Under the Governor's proposal, CDCR would receive an ongoing amount of funding that reflects the costs of redirecting more expensive positions to suicide watch. However, there are a couple of reasons to think the full \$13.6 million requested by CDCR might not be necessary to pay the future costs of suicide watch. First, CDCR reports hiring 79 CNAs in a single hiring event in January 2025 as mentioned above. This suggests CDCR is experiencing greater success in reducing the CNA vacancy rate, which would reduce the cost of suicide watch. For example, if CDCR successfully fills all of its vacant CNA position, these lower-cost positions could reduce the annual cost of suicide watch by about \$2.8 million. Second—even if CDCR cannot maintain its success in recruiting CNAs—costs could be lower if the department is successful in its efforts to identify a classification that is easier to fill and has a lower cost than some of the positions that are currently used.

...And Would Not Adjust to Changes in Suicide Watch Workload. Currently—and under the Governor's proposal—CDCR receives more or less a set amount of funding for suicide watch irrespective of changes in the size of the population. However, it is possible that suicide watch hours could increase or decrease in the future with changes in the prison population. For example, data published by CDCR show that nearly two-thirds of suicide decedents had a mental health designation in 2023, and nearly 90 percent in 2022. To the extent there are changes in the population at risk of suicide, it could drive changes in suicide watch workload. If the number of suicide watch hours needed declines, then the department would be overfunded for these services. On the other hand, if the number of suicide watch hours were to increase, CDCR would be underfunded and likely be forced to use higher-cost positions rather than CNAs because of its limited position authority.

Recommendations

- ***Approve One-Time Funding.*** Because suicide watch is critical to patient safety and the department has struggled to fill these positions in recent years, we recommend the Legislature approve the proposal on a one-time basis. However, the ongoing costs of suicide watch are still uncertain as there are reasons to think it might decline in the future—particularly if CDCR takes steps we recommend below to reduce costs. Limiting the funding to one-time would give the Legislature a natural opportunity to reassess the ongoing level of funding needed for suicide watch as part of the 2026-27 budget process, and allow the department time over the next year to implement the steps we recommend below.
- ***Direct CDCR to Take Steps to Reduce Costs of Suicide Watch.*** In order to reduce the costs of suicide watch and more closely track changes in workload, we recommend the Legislature direct CDCR to take the following steps:
 - ***Continue Efforts to Fill CNA Vacancies.*** As noted above, if the department was fully staffed it could provide more suicide watch hours at a lower cost. As a result, we recommend the Legislature direct CDCR to continue to make efforts to fill the vacant positions. The recent success in hiring CNAs suggests the department may be successful in reducing the number of vacant CNA positions for suicide watch.

- **Create Alternative Classification for Suicide Watch.** We recommend that the Legislature direct CDCR to create an alternative position classification for suicide watch that can supplement the use of CNAs for this workload to the extent it cannot hire a sufficient number of CNAs to fully address this workload. CDCR should strive to identify a classification that is both (1) lower cost than the average the department has historically spent per hour on suicide watch by using other positions and (2) easier to recruit than CNAs.
- **Direct CDCR to Develop a Population-Driven Budgeting Methodology for Suicide Watch.** We recommend the Legislature direct CDCR to develop a budgeting methodology for suicide watch that accounts for changes in the population that drive suicide watch hours. This would ensure the annual resources for suicide watch are more closely tied to the department's needs—an especially important consideration given that the projected decline in the population will likely drive a decline in suicide watch workload.

To help the Legislature ensure that CDCR is making adequate progress on these steps, we recommend directing the department to report on: (1) the strategies it is using to fill vacant CNA positions and data on the effectiveness of these strategies; (2) what classifications it is considering to use for suicide watch as an alternative to CNAs, the rationale for using such classifications, whether it continues to need an alternative to CNAs for suicide watch, and when it expects a new classification could be deployed; and (3) details on a population-based budgeting methodology. This report should be provided to the Legislature no later than January 10, 2026. This would allow the Legislature to consider the report as it is determining the ongoing funding level for suicide watch as part of the 2026-27 budget process.

3. Standardization of Postconviction Proceedings (AB 2483). The Governor's Budget proposes \$2.9 million General Fund in 2025-26 and \$2.9 million in 2026-27 to address workload related to requests for institutional records in resentencing hearings and new requirements authorized in Chapter 964, Statutes of 2024 (Assembly Bill 2483). Currently, non-uniform procedural rules lead to variation and inefficiency across the state in how postconviction proceedings are conducted. Long term, CDCR anticipates AB 2483 will streamline current processes and not increase workload. Currently, however, CDCR has a backlog in records requests for resentencing hearings. After AB 2483 implementation, CDCR is required to provide records within 45 days of request (for records requested on or after January 1, 2026). It will be difficult to meet this new timeline without first clearing the existing backlog; after it is cleared, existing staff can focus solely on new requests.

Assembly Appropriations Analysis. Costs (General Fund) to CDCR to provide records upon an attorney's request, possibly in the millions of dollars annually in increased staffing. The bill does not specify which records CDCR must produce or the exact timeline for production, but CDCR will likely need to hire additional litigation coordinators to locate and review records, redact records for production if needed, and notify other parties whose information appears in the records that they are being disclosed. CDCR will also incur workload costs for staff to attend each of the 58 county court meetings required by the bill.

4. California Grown Agricultural Food Funding (AB 778, 2022). The Governor's Budget proposes \$5 million General Fund one-time in 2025-26, or an additional \$0.15 per incarcerated person, to comply with statutory requirements to purchase California-grown agricultural products. Chapter 576, Statutes of 2022 (Assembly Bill 778) requires, by December 31, 2025, a California state-owned or run institution to achieve the goal of ensuring at least 60 percent of the agricultural food products purchased each calendar year are grown or produced in the state. Having time to conduct the necessary cost analysis based on purchases after implementation will assist with the development of any potential future permanent funding requests.

Assembly Appropriations Analysis. The Department of General Services (DGS) estimates ongoing statewide General Fund costs in the millions of dollars annually for food purchases through DGS food contracts. For each percentage point increase in cost, the ongoing additional cost to the state would be \$2 million to \$3 million annually. In addition to requiring the state to pay up to 25% more for domestically grown out-of-state products over foreign products, the bill requires the state to purchase in-state products when in season and available, regardless of the cost difference. The majority of purchases through DGS food contracts are for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Department of State Hospitals.

5. Community Reentry Programs for Supervised Persons. The Governor's Budget proposes \$44.9 million General Fund in 2025-26, \$47.5 million in 2026-27, \$37.3 million in 2027-28, \$40.1 million in 2028-29 and \$42.9 million in 2029-30 and ongoing, to increase funding for community reentry programs to assist with supporting continuity of services to supervised persons. The Division of Rehabilitative Programs' Community Reentry Programs provide services to CDCR's supervised persons through the following programs: Day Reporting Centers (DRC), Community Based Coalitions, Long Term Offender Reentry and Recovery (LTORR), Life Skills Training Program, and Specialized Treatment for Optimized Programming. These community providers deliver a variety of program services including, but not limited to, substance use disorder treatment, family reunification, life skills, vocational training, temporary housing, and employment services. These programs are necessary to reduce recidivism and support the effective reintegration of incarcerated individuals back into their communities. In the past, DRP has faced challenges with retaining and securing new contract providers to deliver community reentry programming due to rising operational costs statewide.

The Legislative Analyst's Office provides the following recommendations:

Require CDCR to Increase Utilization of Medi-Cal for Parole SUD Treatment. In order to capitalize on the advantages of Medi-Cal-funded Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment programs for people on parole and the willingness of some providers to become Medi-Cal licensed providers, we recommend a series of steps to increase the utilization of these programs for people on parole:

- **Connect All People on Parole With Medically Appropriate SUD Treatment.** We recommend the Legislature require CDCR to refer all people on parole with a medical need for SUD treatment to Medi-Cal licensed providers in the community. This process should be facilitated by the fact that CDCR already screens people for

medical SUD treatment needs and helps people submit Medi-Cal applications while they are in prison.

- **Require STOP Network Providers Become Medi-Cal Providers and Ensure Continuity of Care.** We recommend that the Legislature direct CDCR to require all STOP network providers to become Medi-Cal licensed providers and require that STOP network providers continue services after people are discharged from parole.
- **Structure Funding to Streamline Billing and Reduce Workload.** We recommend requiring STOP network providers to submit their expenditures for reimbursement using the existing Medi-Cal billing structure. This would eliminate the need for funding for services provided to people on parole to pass through the regional STOP contractors. Instead, this process would require that STOP network providers submit their expenditures for reimbursement to counties who would then submit their expenditures to DHCS for either state or federal reimbursement.
- **Ensure Costs Are Not Shifted to Counties and Nonreimbursable Services Maintained.** Under our recommendations above, there could be costs shifted to counties—especially for STOP services that are not covered through Medi-Cal and portions of costs that the federal government does not pay. To ensure such costs are not shifted to counties and nonreimbursable STOP services are maintained, the Legislature could direct DHCS to pass those costs to CDCR. Under this structure, most expenditures on parole SUD treatment would shift from CDCR to Medi-Cal. As such, CDCR would eventually no longer need the full \$98 million (General Fund) currently proposed for STOP in 2025-26, which includes the \$28.3 million cost-of-living increase requested for these services. While this would increase Medi-Cal costs, it would allow for federal reimbursements for a significant portion of the cost of parole SUD treatment service. We estimate this could generate low to mid tens of millions of dollars in net General savings annually.

Provide Requested STOP Funding on a Limited-Term Basis to Allow for Transition. We recommend funding the portion of the Governor's proposal related to STOP (\$28.3 million) for at least one year. This would provide CDCR, DHCS, counties, and the STOP network providers time to implement our recommendations.

Direct CDCR to Contract for Evaluation of Restructured Parole SUD Treatment Programs. Parole rehabilitation programs—including parole SUD treatment—have not been evaluated for cost-effectiveness, making it difficult to know whether the programs are achieving the goals at the lowest possible cost. To address this, we recommend that the Legislature direct the department to partner with external researchers to evaluate parole SUD treatment following the changes discussed above.

Reevaluate Ongoing Need For RHW Proposal and Consider Approving Funding on One-Year Basis. To the extent RHW remains a legislative priority, we recommend the Legislature modify the proposal by funding it on a one-year basis instead of two. In March 2026, the Legislature expects to receive more information about RHW implementation, including

preliminary rates at which people in the program recommit crimes. With this information, the Legislature will be in a better position to revisit the RHW funding level as it deliberates on the 2026-27 budget. In addition, in light of the availability of housing assistance programs under CalAIM, we recommend that Legislature modify the RHW reporting requirement to mandate that CDCR (in consultation with DHCS) also include an analysis of the viability of relying on Medi-Cal rather than RHW for housing people on parole. Under this approach, CDCR would connect people on parole to Medi-Cal providers in the community that can help them receive housing services rather than using RHW. In the report, CDCR should, at minimum, provide information on the relative state cost of relying on Medi-Cal versus RHW and what the pros and cons of RHW and Medi-Cal funded services are. This would allow the Legislature to assess whether RHW merits separate ongoing funding or if CDCR can instead rely Medi-Cal to provide housing services to people on parole at a lower state cost.

Fund Remaining Programs on a Limited-Term Basis and Require Evaluation

Require Evaluation of DRC and LTORR. Given that DRCs and LTORR programs have not been evaluated for cost-effectiveness, we recommend that the Legislature direct CDCR to partner with external researchers to do so. Such an evaluation could result in modest one-time costs to CDCR that would likely be absorbable, though the Legislature could work with the department to determine whether dedicated funding is necessary. We think that the modest costs to the state would be justified, as the evaluation would allow the Legislature to determine whether these programs—totaling over roughly \$40 million in annual spending—merit continued support or need to be restructured to be effective. We recommend this evaluation be provided to the Legislature no later than January 10, 2029 to provide the external evaluator time to complete the review.

Provide Funding on Limited-Term Basis Pending Results of Evaluation. To maintain these programs in operation while the evaluation is being carried out, we recommend providing three years of the proposed increases in funding for DRCs and LTORR programs (\$3.7 million in 2025-26, \$4 million in 2026-27, and \$4.4 million in 2028-29). This would allow the Legislature to review the evaluation as part of its deliberations during the 2029-30 budget process, at which point it could consider whether to provide ongoing funding for DRCs and LTORR programs.

6. Increased Food Costs. The Governor's Budget proposes \$32.1 million General Fund in 2025-26 and ongoing to accommodate rising food costs. CDCR is budgeted for meals on a per incarcerated person per day basis. The last funding adjustment occurred in the 2021 Budget Act, a \$0.22 rate adjustment to implement a Healthy Menu, which brought the funded rate to its current \$3.40 per incarcerated person per day. Escalating costs of food procurement resulting from inflation and supply chain disruptions have resulted in cost increases despite population reductions over the last several years. Currently, food funding is adjusted twice per year through the population-driven Unallocated Standard Adjustment using the authorized rate of \$3.40 per incarcerated person per day. Over time, this funding has not kept pace with rising food costs. Additionally, going forward, CDCR proposes to annually calibrate this amount through incremental baseline adjustments based on the California Consumer Price Index (CPI) to better match CDCR's actual expenditures.

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