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SECRETARY OF STATE
REGISTRATION

STATE OF TENNESSEE
EXECUTIVE ORDER
BY THE GOVERNOR

No. 6

**AN ORDER ESTABLISHING THE TENNESSEE CRIMINAL JUSTICE INVESTMENT
TASK FORCE**

WHEREAS, ensuring safe communities requires both preventing crime and reacting appropriately to its effects; and

WHEREAS, it is the government's responsibility to identify and evaluate the systemic causes of criminal behavior and endeavor to eliminate those causes in order to prevent crime, while at the same time appropriately punishing offenders and ensuring swift and decisive punishment for violent offenders; and

WHEREAS, the incarcerated population in Tennessee has grown by 34% since 2000, despite six consecutive years of reduced admissions to the criminal justice system, and inmates are serving longer prison terms; and

WHEREAS, the State's increasing incarcerated population affects all Tennessee communities, whether rural, suburban, or urban; and

WHEREAS, those who grow up in low-income, poverty-concentrated neighborhoods are six times more likely to end up incarcerated than those from a middle-class community; and

WHEREAS, there is a direct correlation between the number of adverse childhood experiences an individual faces and the likelihood that such an individual has contact with the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of our incarcerated population will eventually be released and, therefore, for the safety of our communities and protection of the State's tax dollars, must be prepared to become productive members of society, and so the government should provide their families and communities with the proper support to help them reach that goal; and

WHEREAS, educational opportunities and technical skills training are essential to inmates' workforce development and employment after incarceration, and thus their successful reentry into society; and

WHEREAS, there is substantial potential to increase educational opportunities for our incarcerated population because over 30% of Tennessee's inmates lack a high school diploma or equivalent and 83% of Tennessee's inmates lack a college degree or vocational certificate; and

WHEREAS, participating in postsecondary educational opportunities while incarcerated and obtaining gainful employment upon release is associated with lower rates of recidivism and more stable, safer communities; and

WHEREAS, mental health and substance abuse issues among our incarcerated population are leading barriers to inmates' successful reintroduction to society and are tied to high rates of recidivism; and

WHEREAS, mental health issues permeate our criminal justice system with roughly 20% of inmates suffering from serious mental illness and up to 64% of our county jail population suffering from mental health challenges; and

WHEREAS, over half of all inmates, including 76% of inmates with mental health issues, and as many as two-thirds of juveniles in the criminal justice system suffer from substance dependence or abuse; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's recidivism rate of 47.2% is an obstacle to achieving safer communities because nearly half of those convicted of crimes either re-offend or violate their supervision conditions upon returning to their communities; and

WHEREAS, the average cost to the Tennessee Department of Correction to house a state prisoner per year is \$28,000; and

WHEREAS, the factors that drive the Tennessee Department of Correction's expenditures include crime rates, policing practices, prosecutions, sentencing, time served, the healthcare needs of the incarcerated population, and recidivism, and it is incumbent on state government to understand and evaluate these cost drivers and ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent in a way that maximizes public safety; and

WHEREAS, proper investment of criminal justice dollars will improve crime prevention, reduce recidivism, help people improve the direction of their own lives and their families' lives, and ultimately boost the safety and success of Tennessee's communities as a whole.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Bill Lee, Governor of the State of Tennessee, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Tennessee Constitution and applicable law, do hereby direct and order the following:

1. The Tennessee Criminal Justice Reinvestment Task Force (“Task Force”) is hereby established.
2. The members of the Task Force shall be appointed by the Governor. Such members may include members of the Governor’s staff, members of the general assembly, representatives or designees of state agencies, members of the law enforcement community, victims of crime and/or their families, citizens from community and faith-based programs, former inmates, or such other professionals or persons with subject matter knowledge or expertise as the Governor may deem helpful in his discretion.
3. The Governor shall consider diversity when making appointments to the Task Force.
4. The Governor shall appoint a chair of the Task Force.
5. The Chair may establish subcommittees of its members to study and analyze the various facets of Tennessee’s criminal justice system as necessary to ensure effective and efficient Task Force operations.
6. The Task Force shall develop legislative and budgetary recommendations over the course of the next two legislative sessions regarding:
 - a. Addressing the growing fiscal and social costs of incarceration;
 - b. Preventing crime, especially reducing recidivism;
 - c. Punishing violent crime promptly and effectively;
 - d. Revising sentencing guidelines and parole and probation standards;
 - e. Preparing offenders for reentering society, including educational opportunities and technical job training;
 - f. Addressing the mental health and substance use crises that plague our incarcerated population; and
 - g. Equipping offenders’ families and communities with tools to help released offenders become productive members of society.
7. Members of the Task Force shall sign an appropriate conflict of interest agreement.
8. The Task Force shall be attached to the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration for administrative purposes, and the Department shall maintain the records of the Task Force in accordance with applicable retention policies.
9. All executive branch departments, agencies, boards and commissions, and any other division of state government shall fully cooperate with the Task Force in carrying out this Executive Order and shall provide staff support and other assistance as reasonably required.

10. Members of the Task Force shall not receive any compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for their official travel expenses pursuant to policies and guidelines promulgated by the Department of Finance and Administration.

11. The Task Force shall terminate on July 1, 2021.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have subscribed my signature and caused the Great Seal of the State of Tennessee to be affixed this 5th day of March, 2019.


GOVERNOR

ATTEST:


SECRETARY OF STATE 

