

2020 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 46

BY REPRESENTATIVE JONES

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to study the impact of COVID-19 on its operations, specifically as it pertains to the safety and security of inmates and staff at its facilities, as well as the feasibility of releasing nonviolent offenders and its impact on mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and to report the number of inmates and staff that have died as a result of COVID-19.

WHEREAS, in February 2020, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections released a letter to its staff and state prison offenders regarding the implementation of policies and procedures of inquiring with staff and all visitors about any symptoms related to COVID-19 and recent travel; and

WHEREAS, according to the policies, if a person presented any symptoms, such as fever, persistent cough, or shortness of breath, or recently traveled to or from certain locations, an additional risk screening was performed and the person may have been denied access to the prison until symptoms subsided; and

WHEREAS, for the safety and security of the inmates and staff in the eight state prisons, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections suspended visitations, tours, and volunteer work; and

WHEREAS, in lieu of visitation, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections worked to expand access to telephone services to ensure inmates had continued access to family and friends during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections also worked to secure hygiene and protection supplies, such as soap, masks, and gloves; and

WHEREAS, each state prison identified areas to quarantine the incarcerated population of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections; and

WHEREAS, on March 28, 2020, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections reported its first confirmed case of COVID-19 within its prisons; and according to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, there were thirty-nine COVID-19 positive inmates and thirty-six COVID-19 positive staff members as of April 9, 2020; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary for the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to study the release of certain nonviolent offenders from its custody during a declared state of emergency and public health emergency in order to reduce the number of positive cases in the prison population; and

WHEREAS, it is important for the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to strive to maintain the safety, security, and well-being of its inmate population and staff and to take necessary precautions to mitigate any potential spread of COVID-19.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to study the impact of COVID-19 on its operations, specifically as it pertains to the safety and security of inmates and staff at its facilities, as well as the feasibility of releasing nonviolent offenders and its impact on mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and to report the number of inmates and staff that have died as a result of COVID-19.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Public Safety and Corrections shall report its findings to the legislature no later than January 1, 2021.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE