

2020 First Extraordinary Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 17

BY REPRESENTATIVES CARPENTER, ADAMS, BAGLEY, BRASS, BROWN, BRYANT, BUTLER, CARRIER, ROBBY CARTER, WILFORD CARTER, CORMIER, COUSSAN, DAVIS, DEVILLIER, DESHOTEL, EMERSON, FONTENOT, FREEMAN, FREIBERG, GAINES, GREEN, HARRIS, JEFFERSON, JENKINS, TRAVIS JOHNSON, JONES, LANDRY, LYONS, MARCELLE, MCCORMICK, MCKNIGHT, MOORE, NELSON, NEWELL, CHARLES OWEN, PIERRE, PRESSLY, ROMERO, STAGNI, THOMPSON, WHITE, WILLARD, AND SELDERS AND SENATORS BARROW, CARTER, CATHEY, REESE, AND WOMACK

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the division of administration, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, and private businesses in Louisiana to recognize the value that justice-involved persons bring to the workforce and society and to act with the intention to empower, train, and employ such individuals.

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to an uncertain employment climate in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, justice-involved persons have unique employment challenges which are further compounded by Louisiana's uncertain economic landscape due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, hiring justice-involved persons reduces recidivism and crime rates; and

WHEREAS, justice-involved person is defined as an individual who has or previously had interactions with the criminal justice system as a defendant, which includes previously incarcerated individuals or individuals on probation and parole; and

WHEREAS, a person who is or was previously involved with the criminal justice system as a defendant and referred to as an offender or a convicted felon shall now be referred to as a justice-involved person in hopes to help change the negative connotation surrounding a person who is or was previously involved with the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative for Louisiana's workforce and tax base to continuously grow, prosper, and attract business and talent while preventing any increase in recidivism and crime rates; and

WHEREAS, the Justice Reinvestment Initiatives of 2017 and other criminal justice reforms maintain a renewed focus on reentry to remove barriers to employment and to facilitate gainful employment for reentering citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of Louisiana should allocate general fund dollars and Justice Reinvestment Initiative savings to continue expanding the Department of Public Safety and Correction's reentry initiatives and programs in its facilities and to continue providing incentives to sheriffs; and

WHEREAS, Act No. 261 of the 2017 Regular Session of the Legislature reinvests a portion of Justice Reinvestment Initiative savings back into reentry programming; and

WHEREAS, Act No. 226 of the 2020 Regular Session of the Legislature requires the Department of Public Safety and Corrections to provide an identification card that lists all vocational licensing and certification programs completed by an individual during his incarceration; and

WHEREAS, Act No. 98 of the 2020 Regular Session of the Legislature requires probation and parole officers to make reasonable accommodations, including the allowance of simultaneous voice and video communication, for probationers and parolees who are employed so that such employees can be physically present at work and still attend their scheduled probation and parole meetings; and

WHEREAS, the people of Louisiana must recognize that many justice-involved persons are essential workers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and are valued contributors to the state's workforce.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the division of administration, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, and private businesses in the state of Louisiana to recognize the value that justice-involved persons can bring to the workforce and society and to act with the intention to empower, train, and employ such individuals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request all of the following:

(1) That the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the Louisiana Workforce Commission utilize the job skill training programs provided by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System and industry-based certification programs offered in Department of Public Safety and Corrections prisons to remove licensing barriers and open pathways to licensure for justice-involved persons during and after incarceration.

(2) That the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the Louisiana Workforce Commission create evidence-based transitional employment opportunities for returning citizens.

(3) That the Department of Public Safety and Corrections continue its work on the Louisiana Prisoner Reentry Initiative's (LA-PRI) Reentry Accountability Plans (ReAP), which provide evidence-based guidance to the justice-involved person, Department of Public Safety and Corrections staff, the judicial system, the committee on parole, the division of probation and parole, local jails, and community resource partners.

(4) That the Department of Public Safety and Corrections continue working with community resource partners and continue utilizing technology to facilitate contact with prospective employers and incarcerated persons prior to their release.

(5) That the Louisiana Workforce Commission establish connections between Louisiana businesses and reentry organizations and business trade organizations to bring and increase awareness of the Louisiana Workforce Commission's bonding capacity, tax credits, and other incentives offered to businesses that hire justice-involved persons.

(6) That the division of administration prioritize and seek to fund reentry initiatives with any future allotments of federal funding related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(7) That Louisiana employers hire justice-involved persons who are referred by established reentry organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, the secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the chair of the Board of Supervisors of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, and the commissioner of administration.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE