



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

BACKGROUNDER

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM TASK FORCE

SUPPORT: SB 458 (Brandes); HB 387 (Peters)

BACKGROUND:

Decades of policies have relied on incarceration as the only solution to issues of criminal justice have left Florida with an extraordinarily harsh system that drives far too many people into jails and prisons to the detriment of public safety. While harsher sentencing was once considered being “tough on crime” these costly policies have proven ineffective at best, and counterproductive at worst. For example:

- Florida spends over \$2.4 billion a year to incarcerate approximately 100,000 people.
- More children are sent to adult court and prison in Florida than any other state.
- Florida’s population roughly tripled between 1970 and 2014, but its prison population increased by more than 1,000%.
- Florida’s sentence lengths increased 166% from 1990 to 2009 - more than any other state.
- Since 2007, 33 states have implemented comprehensive criminal justice reforms. Florida is not one of them.

BILL PROVISIONS:

- Creates a 28-member joint legislative entity called Florida Criminal Justice Reform Task Force for conducting a comprehensive review of the state’s criminal justice system, court system, and corrections system.
- Requires the task force submit a report of its findings, conclusions, and recommendations for proposed legislation to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by the date of convening of the 2018 Regular Legislative Session (January 9, 2018).

RATIONALE:

The Florida legislature addresses piecemeal criminal justice reform measures every year. This task force will allow a comprehensive analysis of Florida’s criminal justice system, with particular focus on alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders, those in need of substance abuse and mental health treatment, and post-incarceration success. These measures can reduce recidivism and keep society safe while saving taxpayer dollars.

*For additional information, please contact --
Ingrid M. Delgado, Associate for Social Concerns/Respect Life
idelgado@flaccb.org (850) 205-6826*