

January 7, 2022

Written testimony to the Special Commission on Correctional Funding

Dear Commissioners:

While the significant increase in funding for re-entry programming in the most recent DOC budget is most definitely a positive step, a 17% increase in total spending [in 2020\$] between 2016 and 2020 simply should not be allowed to stand unless transformational changes are made to the staffing mix within the DOC. And the county jails for that matter. While the average daily prison population dropped over 25% and the number of FTEs dropped 7.4% over the same time period, the cost per inmate' [in 2020\$] has risen 43.8%. [Source: DOC, 2012]

According to my research, in 2019 the number of Correction Officers totaled 3902, while down some 3% from 2012, it still represented something close to 80% of payroll staffing. The Educational category staffing in 2019 totaled 830, down from 867 in 2012. The systemic change which must be made is to the asymmetrical funding of our jails, houses of correction and prisons. To establish the most effective mix of correction and education officers to meet the system's mission statement will be a formidable challenge; it will require additional research, extensive collaboration and political will. It should go without saying that during the transition period the needs and wishes of current officers need to be sufficiently addressed.

For your information I have summarized on the second page data from the set of slides I have attached. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Josh Beardsley
Volunteer, MASCS (Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement)

Decrease in numbers in custody NOT MATCHED by DECREASE in allocations for correctional personnel and INCREASE in allocations for educational staff

- Despite the steady decline in the total number of individuals held in correctional facilities since FY 2015 spending on prisons and jails continues to rise.
 - the **correctional population** at both county sheriffs' departments and the DOC is **down by more than 20 percent and 27 percent respectively**
 - yet total **Governor's allocation** at both the sheriffs' departments and the DOC is **up: slightly for the counties and 11% at the DOC**
- Consequently, **estimated cost per inmate has risen dramatically** – if unevenly- in both the DOC and county jails and Houses of Correction between 2015 and 2020
 - From \$58,667 to \$89,059 in the DOC, or approximately a 56% increase
 - Increases range from 6% in Suffolk county to 66% in Barnstable county between 2015 and 2020
 - In Berkshires county the cost per inmate is an astonishing \$99,000, up from \$82,397 in 2015
- **Even as the number of employees has declined** at all institutions save two, Plymouth county and Hampden county
- With inmate populations declining and correctional facilities seeing potential cost savings, **spending categories associated with recidivism reduction have not increased significantly**, and these services continue to represent a small fraction of total correctional expenditure.
 - The total number of county educational staff shrank some 10% between 2015 and 2020
 - Only a handful of counties have effective ratios of inmates to staff: less than 10 to 1.
 - In the DOC the number of educational staff increased 7% between 2015 and 2019; but, **the ratio of inmates to educational staff remains high at over 10 to 1.**