



Legislation Text

File #: Res 31637, Version: 1

CITY OF SEATTLE
RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION recognizing the obstacles faced by previously incarcerated individuals that often result in recidivism, and the potential to reduce recidivism rates, criminal justice costs, and incarceration's negative impacts on individuals, the community, and the City of Seattle; requesting the Mayor to establish a Prisoner and Community Corrections Re-entry Work Group composed of residents, City departments, the Seattle Municipal Court, and the Legislative Department to coordinate and strengthen the City's efforts to assist prisoner community re-entry.

WHEREAS, in 2015 approximately 2.2 million people were incarcerated nationally - a 500 percent increase in the last 30 years; and

WHEREAS, in 2015 16,675 adults were incarcerated in Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) prisons, with an additional 17,064 under DOC Community Supervision and another 12,618 people on average per day in local jails, with approximately 2,800 jailed in King County; and

WHEREAS, in 2014 about 20 percent of the almost 8,000 individuals released from DOC were released to King County; and

WHEREAS, people of color are disproportionately represented among those released in King County; a 2003 reentry study demonstrated that while African-Americans were only six percent of King County's population, 41 percent of people released from DOC were African-Americans, and while Latinos were only six percent of King County's population, 18 percent of people released from DOC were Latinos; and

WHEREAS, Seattle is home to a significant number of released prisoners - primarily in the downtown commercial district and the central residential neighborhoods that extend down through south Seattle

and the Rainier Valley; and

WHEREAS, national corrections costs exceed \$70,000,000,000 per year, with most of the total borne by state and local governments, DOC spends an average of \$46,897 per year for each inmate, and it costs King County approximately \$147 per day to keep a person incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, reducing recidivism is critical to reducing criminal justice costs; and

WHEREAS, costs of incarceration are so high that even modest reductions can produce significant budget savings; and

WHEREAS, currently there is a danger of overcrowding in Washington prisons and a possible need for prison expansion in the future; and

WHEREAS, data shows that approximately 30-50 percent of all prisoners who are released will be back in prison within three years; and

WHEREAS, reducing recidivism rates will reduce incarceration rates, costs, overcrowding, and the pressure for additional prison space in the future; and

WHEREAS, arrest, conviction, or incarceration can lead to the loss of employment and housing, disrupt family and social ties, and create a social stigma from a criminal record, all of which interfere with an individual's successful reintegration into the community; and

WHEREAS, Seattle has worked to increase the availability and accessibility of employment, housing, public benefits and government services to all persons, recognizing there are particular obstacles for previously incarcerated individuals; and

WHEREAS, Seattle passed the 2013 Jobs Assistance Ordinance to remove barriers to employment for qualified applicants with criminal records; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Murray's Housing Affordability and Livability Committee recommends that the City pursue a combination of local legislation, education, and technical assistance to ensure fair access to Seattle's housing options for people with criminal records, as studies show that people with stable

housing are more likely to successfully reintegrate into society and less likely to reoffend; and WHEREAS, in Seattle's 2015 State Legislative Agenda, Seattle supported HB 1553, introduced in the Washington State legislature in 2015, which would create a court process to obtain a Certificate of Restoration of Opportunity (CROP) that would remove state barriers to occupational licenses and certifications based on a conviction resulting in increased employment and housing opportunities for people with criminal convictions; and

WHEREAS, HB 1553 was unanimously passed by the House, received a hearing in the Senate, but did not pass out of the Senate committee and will be re-introduced in 2016; and

WHEREAS, Seattle recognizes that the continuing negative effects of a criminal record on an individual's ability to enjoy the status of an ordinary resident of Seattle should end, and that, after they have paid their dues to society, individuals with a criminal record should be placed in the same social and legal position they had prior to conviction; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE MAYOR CONCURRING, THAT:

Section 1. Seattle's support for HB 1553, introduced in the Washington State legislature in 2015, will be included in Seattle's Legislative Agenda for the 2016 legislative session and will be a prioritized public safety strategy aligned with its foundation as a Human Rights City.

Section 2. The Mayor is requested to convene a Prisoner and Community Corrections Re-entry Work Group (Work Group). The goal of the Work Group is to coordinate and strengthen the City's efforts to assist prisoner community re-entry. The Work Group will be composed of:

- A. Eight residents with knowledge of the criminal justice system and the Directors, or their designees, of the following departments:
- B. Office of Policy and Innovation;
- C. Office of Housing;

D. Seattle Office of Civil Rights;

E. Human Services Department;

F. Seattle Municipal Court; and

G. Legislative Department.

Section 3. Scope of Work. The Prisoner and Community Corrections Re-entry Work Group will:

A. Inventory the City's current work to help previously incarcerated individuals transition into stable housing and employment;

B. Inventory and assess the City's current imposition and collection of fees and fines for criminal violations and infractions and the impact of such on successful re-entry;

C. Identify areas where the City's efforts would be strengthened by more effective coordination with other criminal justice agencies, and define steps needed to effectuate those changes;

D. Develop a set of additional policies, ordinances, strategies, or programs the City of Seattle can implement to facilitate prisoner re-entry and remove unnecessary barriers to employment, housing and other benefits. Consideration should be given to:

1. Implementation of the Certificate of Restoration of Opportunity (CROP) if State legislation is passed in 2016;

2. Development of a local CROP if State legislation is not passed in 2016;

3. Amendment of current laws prohibiting discrimination in housing and employment to include individuals with a CROP;

4. Coordination with the Housing Affordability and Livability Advisory Committee (HALA) recommendations; and

5. Consideration of a public education campaign on re-entry issues.

Section 4. Schedule and Reports to Council. The Work Group is requested to provide a schedule and anticipated deliverables, to the Council’s Public Safety, Civil Rights and Technology committee, or the successor council committee with oversight of public safety, by the end of February 2016. The Work Group schedule should include a schedule of regular reporting dates to the Council and Mayor. The Work Group’s final report is due September 1, 2016 and should include a fiscal analysis of any recommended changes to city policies, ordinances, strategies, or programs.

Adopted by the City Council the ____ day of _____, 2015, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2015.

President _____ of the City Council

The Mayor concurred the ____ day of _____, 2015.

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Filed by me this ____ day of _____, 2015.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)