

## Justice Reinvestment in North Carolina: How North Carolina Is Reducing Corrections Costs and Recidivism

In June 2011, state leaders from across the political spectrum in North Carolina enacted sweeping legislation that both reduces spending on corrections and increases public safety. Using a data-driven “justice reinvestment” approach, the state received 18 months of intensive technical assistance from the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, in partnership with the Pew Center on the States and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance. With continued resources and support, North Carolina leaders are now working to effectively implement the legislation and achieve the twin goals of increasing public safety and reducing corrections spending.

### North Carolina’s Justice Reinvestment Process

With North Carolina’s prison population expected to grow by 10 percent, or about 3,900 people, by 2020, CSG Justice Center staff carried out intensive data analyses depicting criminal justice system pressures. These analyses, presented to a bipartisan, inter-branch working group, indicated that more than half of prison admissions were people who had failed on probation. Furthermore, only a small percentage—around 15 percent—of the people released from prison first underwent a period of community supervision, with the result that many high-risk offenders were returning to the community without supervision or services. Additionally, community-based treatment programs were not targeting the people who would benefit the most from them, minimizing their overall public safety impact.

The working group, assisted by CSG Justice Center staff, developed a set of policy options designed to address gaps in the state’s sentencing, supervision and treatment systems. State legislators then translated those policies into House Bill 642, “The Justice Reinvestment Act,” which was sponsored by Rep. W. David Guice (R-Transylvania), Rep. John Faircloth (R-Guilford), Rep. Alice Bordsen (D-Alamance), and Rep. Earline Parmon (D-Forsyth).

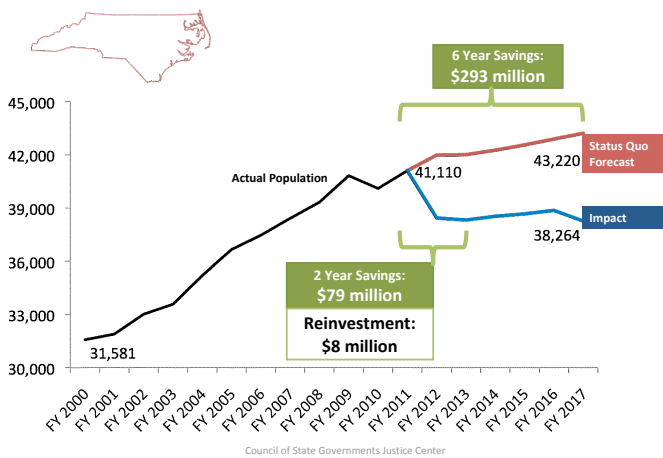
H.B. 642 was written to reduce recidivism by focusing supervision and treatment resources on higher risk offenders, on whom they could have the greatest effect in lowering recidivism. The bill requires everyone leaving prison with a felony conviction to receive post-release supervision. Recognizing that this policy will place increased demands on probation, the bill both requires that the Department of Correction concentrate supervision resources on high-risk individuals and empowers probation officers to employ swift and certain sanctions that cost-effectively hold



offenders accountable. The legislation also provides incentives for offenders who participate in treatment programs and expands the state’s existing felony drug diversion program. In addition, the bill imposes tougher penalties for habitual breaking-and-entering offenders.

The Justice Reinvestment Act passed with near-unanimous bipartisan support in both houses. Governor Bev Perdue, joined by sheriffs and other criminal justice stakeholders, signed the bill into law on June 23, 2011.

As a result, in 2017, the prison population is now expected to be nearly 5,000 beds lower than projected. This will translate into \$560 million in averted costs and cumulative savings (\$267 million in avoided costs and \$293 million in reduced costs). These savings have positioned the state to reinvest more than \$4 million annually (a 40 percent increase in spending) on additional community-based treatment programs to improve outcomes for people on supervision. Above all, by focusing supervision and treatment resources on higher risk offenders, the new law will greatly improve public safety.



The Council of State Governments Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels from all branches of government. The Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies, informed by available evidence, to increase public safety and strengthen communities.

The CSG Justice Center's Justice Reinvestment Initiative to address corrections spending and public safety is a partnership with the Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice. These efforts have provided data-driven analyses and policy options to state leaders in 14 states.

For additional information about Justice Reinvestment in North Carolina, please visit [www.justicereinvestment.org](http://www.justicereinvestment.org).

## Looking Ahead

North Carolina's efforts to reduce recidivism and corrections spending do not stop with the enactment of these policies. State officials are now working to translate the legislation into practice, thereby ensuring that these investments realize the projected outcomes. To enhance the state's capacity to implement the legislation, North Carolina is receiving technical assistance from the CSG Justice Center and funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance that will provide training, education, and upgrades to data systems.



The Pew Center on the States is a division of The Pew Charitable Trusts that identifies and advances effective solutions to critical issues facing states. Pew is a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. Launched in 2006, The Public Safety Performance Project helps states

advance fiscally sound, data-driven policies and practices in sentencing and corrections that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and control corrections costs. For more information, visit [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org).



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