

Introduced by Senator Hancock

February 24, 2015

An act to add and repeal Article 7 (commencing with Section 2696) of Chapter 4 of Title 1 of Part 3 of the Penal Code, relating to prisons.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 356, as introduced, Hancock. Opportunity Yard Pilot Project.

Existing law establishes the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to oversee the state prison system. Existing law requires the department to establish parole reentry and assessment programs and education and training programs for inmates.

This bill would require the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to establish the Opportunity Yard Pilot Project in 5 prisons, as specified. The program would implement promising and evidence-based practices and programming in a separate, special purpose prison housing unit setting designed to strengthen the ability of eligible inmates to successfully reenter society upon completion of their prison sentence. The bill would require the department to set criteria for selecting inmates to participate in the program, select staff for the program, and establish program criteria. The bill would repeal these provisions as of January 1, 2021.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Article 7 (commencing with Section 2696) is
- 2 added to Chapter 4 of Title 1 of Part 3 of the Penal Code, to read:

Article 7. Opportunity Yard Pilot Project

2696. (a) The Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall establish the Opportunity Yard Pilot Project for offenders under the jurisdiction of the department who have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment under Section 1170 and are likely to benefit from placement in a program designed to provide comprehensive educational and rehabilitative programming based on current best practices consistent with the purposes and requirements of this section.

(b) The mission of the pilot program is to implement promising and evidence-based practices and programming in a separate, special purpose prison housing unit setting designed to strengthen the ability of eligible inmates to successfully reenter society upon completion of their prison sentence. The pilot program shall integrate evidence-based practices of supervision, treatment, and rehabilitation in a positive, safe, and purposeful correctional environment.

(c) The program shall be initiated in at least five prisons, as selected by the secretary, for at least three years. At least two of the prisons chosen shall be Level III general population facilities. At least two of the prisons shall be Level IV general population facilities.

(d) The department shall develop and implement criteria for selecting inmates appropriate for housing in the opportunity yards that shall be consistent with all of the following:

(1) Inmate placement in the program shall be voluntary.

(2) To the extent feasible based upon a prison site's population and eligible inmates, the program shall be comprised of at least a majority of offenders between 18 and 26 years of age, inclusive, with a parole consideration hearing date not exceeding five years from the date of their placement in the program.

(3) Placement in the program shall be limited to inmates who demonstrate a commitment to strive daily for self-improvement, succeed in correctional programming, and achieve permanent life change.

(4) Participation in the program may be limited to inmates who agree to be free from disciplinary action; who agree to enroll, participate in, and complete a high school diploma, Associate of Arts, or Bachelor of Arts college degree, or vocational trade school;

1 and who agree to complete job-training curriculum, maintain a job
2 on the opportunity yard campus, and to serve as a peer mentor.

3 (e) The department shall develop and implement appropriate
4 selection criteria and training to ensure that staff assigned to an
5 Opportunity Yard are highly motivated and skilled in fulfilling the
6 mission of the program.

7 (f) The department shall develop and implement programming
8 and curriculum for the program consistent with this section.

9 (g) The department shall develop and implement a plan for
10 evaluating the program and identifying outcome measures for
11 program participants.

12 (h) The department shall adopt emergency regulations to
13 implement this section initially, and shall subsequently adopt
14 permanent regulations that make appropriate changes in policies
15 and procedures to implement this section.

16 (i) This article shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2021,
17 and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that
18 is enacted before January 1, 2021, deletes or extends that date.