



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY AND A PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCARCERATED AND RECENTLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS.

WHEREAS, the criminal justice policy of the state under Article II, section 28, of the Montana Constitution is founded on four principles, one of which is reformation; and

WHEREAS, Article X, section 1(1), of the Montana Constitution establishes the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person; and

WHEREAS, nationwide, less than half of incarcerated individuals have a high school diploma; and

WHEREAS, individuals without a high school diploma, career training, or other educational or workforce credential will likely struggle to find gainful employment; and

WHEREAS, as the Montana economy recovers from the pandemic and again experiences low unemployment and workforce shortages, the state will benefit by maximizing the productivity and independence of all its citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

(1) That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee or statutory committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to study educational and career training opportunities for incarcerated and recently incarcerated individuals.

(2) That the Legislative Audit Committee be requested to prioritize a performance audit of educational and career training opportunities for incarcerated and recently incarcerated individuals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the interim committee:

- (1) gather information about the existing educational and career training opportunities and the educational status of incarcerated individuals, including but not limited to:
 - (a) the educational attainment of individuals on entry into the correctional system and on exit;
 - (b) the educational programs available to incarcerated individuals by educational level;
 - (c) participation rates of incarcerated individuals in educational programs and any current incentives to participate;
 - (d) the capability of the correctional system to offer, expand, and incentivize education opportunities; and
 - (e) the impacts of inmate participation in educational programs while incarcerated, including measurement of attainment for each participant.
- (2) investigate available programs and funding streams that focus on developing the employability skills of the recently incarcerated;
- (3) request information and input from the Department of Corrections, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Office of Public Instruction, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and tribal colleges;
- (4) seek solutions that:
 - (a) serve the current and future workforce needs of the state;
 - (b) focus on collaboration between the criminal justice system, the educational system, and the business community; and
 - (c) create incentives for the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated to develop their full educational and employment potential;
- (5) involve the public and other stakeholders identified by the committee;
- (6) examine successful programs established in other states; and
- (7) explore other aspects of the topic as determined by the committee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the Legislative Audit Committee conducts an audit of educational and career training opportunities for incarcerated and recently incarcerated individuals, the interim committee assigned to conduct the interim study also reviews the resulting audit report and requests legislation, if needed,

to enact any recommendations from the audit.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the interim committee study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the interim committee study and the performance audit, including presentation and review requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2022.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions, comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 68th Legislature.

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