

MINUTES
(Subject to Approval by the Committee)
Criminal Justice Reinvestment Oversight Committee
Friday, September 17, 2021
9:00 A.M.
Room WW 54
Boise, Idaho

Cochair Chaney called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.; a silent roll call was taken - all members and staff participated via video conference.

Members present: Cochairs Senator Todd Lakey and Representative Greg Chaney; Senators Jeff Agenbroad and Melissa Wintrow; and Representatives James Holtzclaw and Bruce Skaug. Members absent and excused: Senators Patti Ann Lodge and Grant Burgoyne; and Representatives John McCrostie and Colin Nash. Legislative Services Office (LSO) staff present: Ryan Bush, Jared Hoskins, and Grace King.

NOTE: presentations and materials distributed to members are posted to the Idaho Legislature's website: <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2021/interim/cjro/>; and copies of those items are on file with the Legislative Services Office located in the State Capitol.

Introductory Remarks and Approval of the Minutes

After opening remarks, Cochair Chaney called for the approval of the October 29, 2020, minutes. **Senator Wintrow made a motion to approve the October 29, 2020, minutes. Senator Lakey seconded the motion and the motion passed by voice vote.**

Department of Correction Update on Staffing Issues

Cochair Chaney recognized Josh Tewalt, Director of the Department of Correction (DOC), to give a presentation regarding staffing issues within the DOC. Director Tewalt's presentation included information regarding inmate population, critical staffing needs, negative impacts of staffing shortages, recruiting tactics, and future concerns.

- Representative Skaug wondered what DOC programs were inactive due to staffing shortages. Director Tewalt stated there were no inactive programs but some programs, such as visitation and recreation, were running at reduced capacity.
- Senator Wintrow asked what areas in the DOC's budget were cut to compensate for increased salaries and bonuses to retain staff. Director Tewalt explained that, despite the DOC's efforts, the agency was never fully staffed. He added that this allows the DOC to reinvest savings from staffing shortages to fund increased salaries and bonuses. Senator Wintrow wondered what safety measures were being used to prevent the spread of Covid-19 within the DOC. Director Tewalt described the DOC's relationship with the state epidemiologist and detailed vaccine rates for staff and inmates. He added that the DOC has the capability for mass testing to help mitigate the spread. Senator Wintrow asked if safety measures such as wearing masks and social distancing were being used. Director Tewalt confirmed that measures recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) were being implemented but stated that enforcing those measures can be difficult. Senator Wintrow commented on the need for the Legislature to fund state agencies adequately. Director Tewalt expressed his appreciation for the support the DOC has received from the governor's office and the Legislature and assured the committee that he was working toward making a positive work environment within the agency. Senator Wintrow stated that Director Tewalt helped identify issues that all state agencies were experiencing and that the Legislature should address.

- Cochair Lakey wondered what approaches the DOC was taking to improve probation and parole practices. Director Tewalt explained that the DOC created a new entry-level position to help alleviate the workload of existing parole officers. He added that, due to its success in the districts where the position was piloted, the DOC intends to implement this position statewide. He highlighted the benefits of using reentry specialists and shared that the DOC intended to ask the Legislature to fund 20 additional positions.
- Senator Agenbroad asked if Director Tewalt had specific ideas to address the issue of childcare for staff members. Director Tewalt admitted that he had no specific ideas yet but assured the committee he will continue working toward a solution.

After closing remarks from Cochairs Chaney and Lakey, the committee adjourned at 10:10 a.m.