H-2436.1

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**HOUSE BILL 2169**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Mosbrucker, Goodman, Leavitt, Simmons, Ormsby, Graham, Callan, Rule, Cheney, and Davis

AN ACT Relating to a pilot program creating a healthier environment for correctional officers, department of corrections staff, and individuals within a correctional facility; adding a new section to chapter 72.09 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes that incarceration has negative physical and mental health impacts on correctional officers, department of corrections staff, and incarcerated individuals. Nationally, the average life expectancy of a correctional officer is 59 years old, which is 16 years shorter than those who do not work in corrections. Further, the legislature recognizes that suicide rates for correctional officers are 39 percent higher than the national working age population. Incarcerated individuals experience more illness than those who are not incarcerated. The legislature finds that a more normal and overall healthier environment while incarcerated better prepares people for reentry and helps ensure that the prison environment is not harmful to the people who work there.

(2) Therefore, the legislature intends to create a pilot program that will improve the working conditions for department of corrections staff and a healthier environment for the incarcerated population to focus on reentering communities with the tools needed to be successful. The legislature intends for the program to reduce risks identified by the department including preventing violent behavior that harms members of the public, reducing recidivism, reducing stress and therefore improving health outcomes for department staff and incarcerated individuals, improving security within department facilities, improving communication and voluntary compliance with infectious disease control measures, reducing employee illness and injury, reducing violence among incarcerated individuals and against department staff, and improving recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 72.09 RCW to read as follows:

(1)(a) The department shall establish a four-year pilot program at the Washington state penitentiary east complex with the goals of improved communication between correctional officers, department staff, and incarcerated individuals and reducing recidivism.

(b) The department shall select contact officers to act as mentors and coaches to encourage prosocial behaviors, provide advice, direction, and support to incarcerated individuals to change their lives and behaviors for the better through their continuum of reentry.

(c) The department shall train correctional officers in the pilot program on dynamic security tactics. Dynamic security must improve the relationship between incarcerated individuals and correctional staff. Certain officers may also receive specialized competency-based, programmatic training in individual and team-based crisis de-escalation.

(d) The department shall initiate appropriate improvement efforts so that the work environment for corrections officers, including staff decompression rooms, and life while incarcerated resembles life in the community to the highest extent possible. Improvement of the east complex may include painting and planting programs.

(2) The secretary shall adopt any rules and policies necessary to implement the requirements of this section.

(3) By December 1st each year, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department shall submit a report to the governor and the legislature on:

(a) The number of correctional officers, department staff, and incarcerated individuals participating in the pilot program and a summary of improvement projects undertaken.

(b) Patterns and any effects on behaviors and participation by correctional officers, department staff, and incarcerated individuals.

(c) Differential outcomes for correctional officers, department staff, and incarcerated individuals participating in the pilot program compared with correctional officers, department staff, and individuals not participating in the pilot program.

(d) Recidivism outcomes for those individuals that participated in the pilot program while incarcerated, including arrests, charges, and convictions.

(4) This section expires June 30, 2030.

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