

HCS HB 973 -- PRISON TO PROSPERITY TASK FORCE

SPONSOR: Franks Jr.

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions by a vote of 10 to 0.

The bill establishes the "Task Force on Prison to Prosperity." The task force will develop a statewide plan for prison to prosperity programs for 17 to 24 year olds to assist in the transition from incarceration to being a productive community citizen. The plan shall include specified items including education, job training, mental health and behavioral treatment, mentoring, financial literacy and expungement of juvenile records.

The task force consists of 18 specified members who will serve without compensation. The Speaker of the House of Representatives will appoint a chairperson and vice chairperson. The members of the task force shall meet at least quarterly and submit a recommendation for a statewide plan to the General Assembly by December 31, 2018.

The provisions of this bill will terminate on May 31, 2019.

This bill has an emergency clause.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that it is important to prepare offenders prior to their release. Recidivism is reduced when offenders have jobs and places to live waiting for them when they are released. It makes it less likely that they will return to the lives they lived prior to their incarceration. The program partners with various organizations, including Ranken, to help inmates learn trades and skills while incarcerated to make them more employable upon release. The crime epidemic is not contained in St. Louis; it is pervasive. This type of program is a crucial part of making inmates better citizens. Most of us have had someone in our lives to mentor us and teach us right from wrong. This is not the case for some of these inmates, and this program exists to help teach these individuals.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Franks Jr.; Empower Missouri; John Bowman; and Dr. Alice Prince, SLATE.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that the Director of the Department of Corrections is on board with the program, as she is already taking a holistic approach to improving the department.

Testifying on the bill was the Department of Corrections.