October 2, 2017

The Honorable John C. Carney, Governor
Governor Executive Office
150 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Dover, Delaware 19901

Re: The National Criminal Justice Reform Project: Delaware’s Strategic Plan for Prisoner Reentry

Dear Governor Carney:

As you know, the National Criminal Justice Reform Project (NCJRP) is a long-term technical assistance opportunity provided by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the National Criminal Justice Association Center for Justice Planning (NCJP) to assist with our criminal justice reform agenda. The NCJRP theory of change is that a governor’s commitment to reforming the state’s criminal justice system creates the mandate necessary for transformation. Further, efforts must bolster the State Administering Agency’s (SAA) capacity for implementing and sustaining a data-driven strategic planning process to establish policy priorities and promote wider adoption of evidence-based programming. The project is funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation which is dedicated to crime reduction, the increase in public safety and ensuring that the criminal justice system operates as fairly and cost-effectively as possible.

Delaware was selected to participate in March 2017 as one of five selected states due to your leadership and the commitment of the Delaware Criminal Justice Council to reduce recidivism. Delaware is dedicated to pursuing a reduction in the number and rate of individuals reoffending and violating post-release, and returning to prison by improving its prisoner reentry process and providing better access to evidence based practices that directly target criminogenic (crime-producing) risk factors. In addition, the reform project also focuses on the mental health and substance use disorder populations. Through the NCJRP, Delaware has received technical assistance for the past seven months through NCJRP’s strategic planning process.

The assistance has included four on-site visits and access to valuable tools and resources for our prisoner reentry reform efforts. The Committee on Criminal Justice Reform was established under the Council to oversee the project and conducted its first meeting in April. The Committee in turn appointed a Core Team of reform leaders to manage the day to day operations of this robust effort and, together with the Committee, has established three workgroups, one dedicated to Evidence-Based Practices, one dedicated to Prisoner Reentry policies, processes and intermediate performance measures and one dedicated to Data and Evaluation.
Under the umbrella of the Prisoner Reentry Workgroup, four subgroups have been established (Housing, Employment, Education and Behavioral Health) to identify and build upon Delaware’s prisoner reentry assets – such as our I-ADAPT process, the state’s Reentry Court, the prison system’s Risk, Need and Responsivity Project and the work of Connections Community Support Programs Inc. – and the barriers to improved system and individual offender success.

The initiative is targeting the offenders assessed to be at moderate to high risk for re-offending for whom recidivism is most likely. The Committee, the Core Team, the Workgroups and the subgroups have been meeting regularly since April 2017 and have produced some remarkable results in that short time. We feel quite certain that as our efforts continue, we will show a demonstrable decrease in the state’s xx% recidivism rate through the eventual implementation of improved reentry policies and practices.

The purpose of this report is to provide you our vision, mission and goals, our early results, our recommendations to you for several important policy considerations, and our general plans to move forward under the NCJRP for the next two years - if continuation funding is provided for by the Foundation.

Our results thus far include the Delaware Recidivism Reduction System Blueprint, the Delaware Prisoner Reentry Initiative Framework, the Charge of the Evidence-Based Practice Workgroup that will guide the work moving forward, and most importantly, the Preliminary Policy Recommendations for Recidivism Reduction from the work groups for your consideration. Within each of the aforementioned documents we’ve deliberately made an effort to clearly define both Reentry and Evidence Based Practices as to advance a path forward that aligns consistently with these terms. Finally, we’ve developed preliminary recommendations for a Survival Analysis that will allow us to immediately monitor the intermediate performance of the reforms once they are implemented.

We look forward to discussing our results and plans with you at your earliest convenience as we move the project forward and continue to work throughout 2017 with the National Governors Association and the National Criminal Justice Association Center for Justice Planning.

Romain Alexander
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