

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Government Operations to which was referred House
3 Bill No. 435 entitled “An act relating to miscellaneous Department of
4 Corrections-related amendments” respectfully reports that it has considered the
5 same and recommends that the Senate propose to the House that the bill be
6 amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu
7 thereof the following:

8 * * * Polygraph Examinations; Drug Testing; Report * * *

9 **Sec. 1. [Deleted.]**

10 * * * Organization * * *

11 Sec. 2. 28 V.S.A. § 123 is added to read:

12 § 123. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS MONITORING COMMISSION

13 (a) Creation. There is created the Corrections Monitoring Commission to
14 provide advice and counsel to the Commissioner of Corrections with regard to
15 the Commissioner’s responsibility to manage the reporting of sexual
16 misconduct; promote adherence to anti-retaliation policies; ensure overall
17 policy implementation and effectiveness; improve the transparency,
18 accountability, and cultural impact of agency decisions; and ensure that the
19 determination of investigatory findings and any resulting disciplinary actions
20 are just and appropriate.

21 (b) Members.

1 (1) The Commission shall be composed of the following **nine** members:

2 (A) a former judge with knowledge of the criminal justice system,
3 appointed by the Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court;

4 (B) a retired attorney, appointed by the Department of State's
5 Attorneys and Sheriffs;

6 (C) a former corrections officer, appointed by the Vermont State
7 Employees' Association;

8 (D) two formerly incarcerated individuals who resided at different
9 facilities, appointed by the Defender General;

10 (E) the Executive Director of the Vermont Network Against
11 Domestic and Sexual Violence or designee;

12 (F) a former management-level employee of the Department of
13 Corrections with experience in corrections management, appointed by the
14 Governor;

15 (G) an individual at large with knowledge of and experience in the
16 correctional system, crime prevention, human resources, or compliance,
17 appointed by the Governor; **and**

18 (H) a former employee of a Vermont Community Justice Center,
19 appointed by the Community Justice Network of Vermont.

20 (2) No member, at the time of appointment or during membership, shall
21 be employed by the Department of Corrections or work in any part of the State

1 correctional system. To the extent feasible, the appointing entities shall
2 appoint members that will create a diverse Commission including gender,
3 racial, and cultural diversity. Commission members shall demonstrate an
4 understanding of and respect for the values, dignity, and diversity of
5 individuals who are in the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections and
6 those working within the State correctional system. If an appointing entity is
7 unable to find a candidate for appointment to the Commission who meets the
8 criteria of subdivision (1) of this subsection, the appointing entity may appoint
9 an individual with relevant lived experience.

10 (c) Powers and duties. The Commission shall have the following duties:

11 (1) Provide advice and counsel to the Commissioner of Corrections in
12 carrying out the Commissioner’s responsibilities at the Department of
13 Corrections to monitor reporting of sexual misconduct, oversee the
14 implementation of the Department’s anti-retaliation policy, create transparency
15 and implement policies relating to misconduct, and review disciplinary actions.

16 (2) Examine facility staffing needs, employee retention, employee
17 working conditions, and employee morale. The Commission may interview
18 current Department employees and individuals in the custody of the
19 Department, review exit interview records for former Department employees,
20 and meet with the Vermont State Employees’ Association to further the
21 Commission’s understanding of these issues. The Commission shall report

1 annually on or before January 15 to the Commissioner of Corrections, the
2 Secretary of Human Services, the House Committee on Corrections and
3 Institutions, and the Senate Committee on Judiciary on:

4 (A) the Department’s progress in improving staffing retention,
5 working conditions, and employee morale over the year;

6 (B) the largest barriers to further improvement in staffing retention,
7 working conditions, and employee morale; and

8 (C) any recommendations for improving employee retention,
9 working conditions, and employee morale, including identifying any efforts
10 undertaken in other states that could be implemented at the Department.

11 (3) Monitor the Department in the following areas:

12 (A) the timely reporting of allegations of sexual misconduct;

13 (B) compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act;

14 (C) the Department’s implementation of and adherence to policies
15 relating to employee misconduct and discipline;

16 (D) employees’ adherence to Department policies, procedures, and
17 directives, particularly to code of ethics and anti-retaliation policies;

18 (E) maintenance of an independent reporting hotline to the State
19 Police at the women’s facility;

20 (F) investigations of employee misconduct, the movement of
21 contraband in facilities, threats to personal safety, and the Department’s

1 response to major events that occur in the Department of Corrections,
2 including the death of an individual in the custody of the Commissioner of
3 Corrections and the escape of an individual from a Department facility or
4 Department custody; and

5 (G) facility staffing needs, employee retention, and employees'
6 working conditions and morale.

7 (4) Beginning on January 1, 2023, report annually to the Commissioner
8 of Corrections, the Secretary of Human Services, the House Committee on
9 Corrections and Institutions, and the Senate Committee on Judiciary on metrics
10 that assess the Department's performance in the areas identified in subdivision
11 (c)(3) of this section, including listing the number of complaints of retaliation
12 and complaints of sexual misconduct and the outcomes of those complaints;
13 identifying areas of repeated noncompliance with policies, procedures, and
14 directives; and providing recommendations for improving compliance and
15 eliminating instances of sexual misconduct in the Department of Corrections.

16 (d) Member terms. The members of the Commission shall serve staggered
17 three-year terms. A vacancy created before the expiration of a term shall be
18 filled in the same manner as the original appointment for the unexpired portion
19 of the term. A member appointed to fill a vacancy before the expiration of a
20 term shall not be deemed to have served a term for the purpose of this
21 subsection. Members of the Commission shall be eligible for reappointment.

1 Members of the Commission shall serve not more than two consecutive terms.

2 A member may be removed by a majority vote of the members of the
3 Commission.

4 (e) Meetings.

5 (1) The Commission shall annually select a chair from among its
6 members at the first meeting.

7 (2) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

8 (f) Assistance. The Commission shall have the administrative, technical,
9 and legal assistance of the Department of Corrections.

10 (g) Commissioner of Correction's duties. The creation and existence of the
11 Commission shall not relieve the Commissioner of his or her duties under the
12 law to manage, supervise, and control the Department of Corrections.

13 (h) Reimbursement. Members of the Commission shall be entitled to
14 receive per diem compensation and reimbursement for expenses in accordance
15 with 32 V.S.A. § 1010.

16 Sec. 3. SUNSET OF CORRECTIONS MONITORING COMMISSION

17 28 V.S.A. § 123 (Department of Corrections Monitoring Commission) is
18 repealed on July 1, 2025.

1 Sec. 4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORRECTIONS MONITORING
2 COMMISSION

3 (a) The Corrections Monitoring Commission, created in Sec. 2 of this act,
4 is established on January 1, 2022.

5 (b) Members of the Commission shall be appointed on or before
6 December 1, 2021. Terms of members shall officially begin on January 1,
7 2022.

8 (c)(1) In order to stagger the terms of the members of the Corrections
9 Monitoring Commission as described in 28 V.S.A. § 123 in Sec. 2 of this act,
10 the initial terms of those members shall be as follows:

11 (A) the Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court shall appoint a
12 member for a three-year term;

13 (B) the Department of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs shall appoint a
14 member for a two-year term;

15 (C) the Vermont State Employees’ Association shall appoint a
16 member for a three-year term;

17 (D) the Defender General shall appoint two members, one for a one-
18 year term and one for a three-year term;

19 (E) the Executive Director of the Vermont Network Against
20 Domestic and Sexual Violence or designee shall serve a two-year term;

1 (F) the Governor shall appoint a member to fill the position
2 designated in subdivision (b)(1)(F) of Sec. 2 of this act for a two-year term;

3 (G) the Governor shall appoint a member to fill the position
4 designated in subdivision (b)(1)(G) of Sec. 2 of this act for a one-year term;

5 and

6 (H) the Community Justice Network of Vermont shall appoint a
7 member for a one-year term.

8 (2) After the expiration of the initial terms set forth in subdivision (1) of
9 this subsection, Commission member terms shall be as set forth in 28 V.S.A.
10 § 123 in Sec. 2 of this act.

11 Sec. 5. 28 V.S.A. § 124 is added to read:

12 § 124. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; CORRECTIONS

13 INVESTIGATIVE UNIT

14 (a) Creation. There is created the Corrections Investigative Unit (CIU)
15 within the Department. The CIU shall investigate the following topics to
16 comply with federal law and to identify systemic issues within the Department:

17 (1) allegations of violations of the Prison Rape Elimination Act;

18 (2) major events that occur in the Department, including the death of an
19 individual in the custody of the Department or the escape of an individual from
20 a facility or the custody of Department staff;

21 (3) Department compliance with policies, procedures and directives;

1 (4) the movement of contraband in facilities; and

2 (5) threats against the personal safety of Department employees and
3 individuals in the custody of the Department.

4 (b) Staff. The Commissioner of Corrections shall appoint and employ
5 sufficient staff and adopt the necessary procedures for the CIU to carry out the
6 duties required under this section.

7 (c) Coordination. The CIU shall coordinate with outside investigative
8 agencies and law enforcement agencies concerning criminal allegations and
9 shall coordinate with a designated point of contact at the Department of
10 Human Resources on employee misconduct investigations and disciplinary
11 actions. The CIU shall conduct personal safety planning as necessary for
12 employees who receive threats.

13 (d) Employee rights.

14 (1) An employee who is subject to questioning or investigation by the
15 CIU shall be entitled to all procedural and substantive rights afforded to the
16 employee by State and federal law and any applicable collective bargaining
17 agreement or employment contract, including any contractual rights that apply
18 to proceedings or investigations that may result in an adverse employment
19 action.

1 ~~direct supervisory relationship with the person being supervised. For purposes~~
2 ~~of this subdivision, a person is engaged in a direct supervisory relationship~~
3 ~~with a supervisee if the supervisee is assigned to the caseload of that person~~
4 knows or reasonably should have known that the offender is being supervised
5 by the Department, unless the offender and the employee, contractor, or person
6 providing services were married, parties to a civil union, or engaged in a sexual
7 relationship at the time of sentencing for the offense for which the offender is
8 being supervised by the Department.

9 (b) A person who violates subsection (a) of this section shall be imprisoned
10 for not more than five years or fined not more than \$10,000.00, or both.

11 Sec. 7. CRIMINAL JUSTICE COUNCIL; DEPARTMENT OF
12 CORRECTIONS; CERTIFICATION PROCESS

13 During the 2021 legislative interim, the Criminal Justice Council and the
14 Department of Corrections shall develop a proposal governing minimum
15 training standards, complaint investigations, and a process for certification and
16 decertification of correctional officers as defined in 28 V.S.A. § 3. The
17 proposal shall address the relationship between the Council's and the
18 Corrections Investigative Unit's scope of investigative authority. On or before
19 December 1, 2021, the Council and the Department shall report the proposal to
20 the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee, including any fiscal and
21 programmatic impact of the proposal.

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* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.

(Committee vote: _____)

Senator _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE