

1 H.182

2 Introduced by Representatives Cina of Burlington, Colburn of Burlington,
3 Gonzalez of Winooski, Houghton of Essex, and Page of
4 Newport City

5 Referred to Committee on

6 Date:

7 Subject: Corrections; mental health; study committee

8 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the
9 Corrections and Mental Health Study Committee to examine how to transition
10 the corrections system into a mental health rehabilitation system.

11 An act relating to the creation of the Corrections and Mental Health Study
12 Committee

13 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

14 Sec. 1. CORRECTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH; INTENT

15 It is the intent of the General Assembly to improve treatment in the State
16 corrections system by reframing crime as a public health issue. The reformed
17 system should be rehabilitative in nature and provide opportunities for inmates
18 to participate in the creation of long-term treatment plans for their mental and
19 physical health and recovery. The reformed system should also ensure State

1 correctional facilities implement restorative practices by shifting their focus
2 from offenders to victim impact and public safety.

3 Sec. 2. CORRECTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH STUDY COMMITTEE

4 (a) Creation. There is created the Corrections and Mental Health Study
5 Committee to examine and make recommendations on how the State of
6 Vermont can transition the corrections system to a mental health
7 rehabilitation system.

8 (b) Membership. The Committee shall be composed of the following
9 members:

10 (1) the Commissioner of Corrections or designee;

11 (2) the Commissioner of Mental Health or designee;

12 (3) the Commissioner of Health or designee;

13 (4) the Secretary of Human Services or designee;

14 (5) the Deputy Commissioner of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs or
15 designee;

16 (6) the Commissioner for Children and Families or designee;

17 (7) the Executive Director of Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform
18 or designee;

19 (8) a representative of the Community Justice Network of Vermont;

20 (9) a representative of Vermont Psychiatric Survivors;

21 (10) the Health Care Advocate or designee;

1 (11) a representative of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
2 or designee; and

3 (12) a representative of the Department of Corrections' Victim
4 Services Program.

5 (c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall examine existing medical,
6 mental health, and substance use disorder treatments available in State
7 correctional facilities. It shall make recommendations for the development of
8 a robust health care system within State correctional facilities that makes
9 available those medical, mental health, and substance use disorder services
10 available in the community. The Committee shall also address the following:

11 (1) the social construction of crime;

12 (2) the causes of crime;

13 (3) how to reframe crime as a public health issue;

14 (4) the strengths and weaknesses of the current State corrections
15 system, including an inventory of available medical, mental health, and
16 substance use disorder treatments; and

17 (5) how to reframe the State's response to crime by providing both
18 voluntary and involuntary services, including:

19 (A) initial evaluations upon admission for all inmates to identify
20 addictions and any underlying health care issues that may cause substance

1 use disorders, followed by a treatment plan with goals and objectives to guide
2 care and promote recovery during each inmate's time in the facility;

3 (B) access to consistent health care by trained staff who understand
4 how to use evidence-based treatments;

5 (C) discharge planning that provides a continuity of care from the
6 State correctional facility to the community;

7 (D) educational and vocational opportunities, including assistance
8 with job placement;

9 (E) access to universal housing, including transitional housing and
10 supported living options;

11 (F) opportunities to build savings for the inmate's transition back
12 into the community; and

13 (G) opportunities to develop a restorative plan to make amends for
14 an inmate's past choices.

15 (d) Assistance. The Committee shall have the administrative, technical,
16 and legal assistance of the Department of Corrections.

17 (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2020, the Committee shall submit a
18 written report with its findings and any recommendations for legislative
19 action to the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on
20 Human Services, and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on
21 Judiciary.

1 (f) Meetings.

2 (1) The Commissioner of Corrections shall call the first meeting of the
3 Committee to occur on or before August 1, 2019.

4 (2) The Commissioner of Corrections shall be Chair.

5 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

6 (4) The Committee shall cease to exist on January 31, 2020.

7 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

8 This act shall take effect on passage.