

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Criminal Justice

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BILL: SB 226

INTRODUCER: Senator Bracy

SUBJECT: Inmate Reentry Services

DATE: October 6, 2017

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

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	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Jones	Jones	CJ	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.	_____	_____	ACJ	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 226 creates s. 944.8025, F.S., to allow representatives from nonprofit faith-based, business and professional, civic, and community organizations to apply to be registered with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide inmate reentry services.

The bill requires the DOC to develop procedures for screening, approving, and registering applicants. The DOC must also provide a contact telephone number and the application for this registration on its website. The DOC may deny the approval and registration of an applicant if the applicant does not meet the department's screening guidelines.

The fiscal impact of the bill can be absorbed within existing resources at the DOC.

The bill is effective October 1, 2018.

**II. Present Situation:**

The Department of Corrections (DOC) begins the reentry process 240 days prior to an inmate's release. Release officers and health service providers assess the inmate's post-release needs and develop a release plan. The release plan is individualized for each inmate and includes community referrals specific to his or her needs.<sup>1</sup>

The DOC also maintains a website with a reentry resource directory. The directory is searchable and contains over 6,000 community, state, and local organizations that provide transition

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<sup>1</sup> Florida Department of Corrections, *FDC – Background Information on Re-Entry Programming and Transitional Services*, p. 1, (on file with the Senate Criminal Justice Committee).

services to ex-offenders. The DOC routinely verifies these resources and accepts applications from interested organizations to be included in the directory.<sup>2</sup>

Volunteer involvement in the DOC facilities is highly valued by the department. Volunteers contribute thousands of services hours to help offenders become more productive law abiding citizens.<sup>3</sup> To volunteer with the DOC a person, at minimum, must submit a volunteer application, complete volunteer training, and have a scheduled and approved event or activity in which he or she is an approved participant. The DOC also conducts a background check on each prospective volunteer. Approved volunteers are entered into the Facility Access Secure Tracking system.<sup>4</sup> Over 6,000 volunteers a month assist the DOC by providing activities, classes, support groups, and other programing within the correctional facilities.<sup>5</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates s. 944.8025, F.S., to allow representatives from nonprofit faith-based, business and professional, civic, and community organizations to apply to be registered with the DOC to provide inmate reentry services. The bill specifies that the inmate reentry services include, but are not limited to, counseling, providing information on housing and job placement, and money management assistance.

The bill requires the DOC to develop and adopt policies and procedures for screening, approving, and registering applicants. The DOC must post a telephone number and the application for registration on its website. The bill specifies that the DOC may deny approval and registration of any applicant that does not meet its screening guidelines. The DOC and the correctional facilities retain the right to deny entry to a correctional facility of any registered representative.

The bill specifies that the DOC does not endorse or sponsor any faith-based reentry program or endorse any specific religious message or require an inmate to participate in a faith-based program. The bill provides the DOC with rulemaking authority to implement the application and registration process of qualified applicants.

The bill is effective October 1, 2018.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

#### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

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<sup>2</sup> 2018 Florida Department of Corrections Bill Analysis, *SB 226*, p. 2, October 2, 2017, (on file with the Senate Criminal Justice Committee).

<sup>3</sup> Join the Florida Department of Corrections, *Interested in Volunteering?*, available at <http://www.fldocjobs.com/volunteer/index.html#Need> (last visited October 4, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> *Supra* note 2.

<sup>5</sup> Join the Florida Department of Corrections, *Interested in Volunteering? Contact Us About Volunteering*, available at <http://fldocjobs.com/volunteer/request.html> (last visited October 4, 2017).

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The bill requires the DOC to develop and adopt policies and procedures for screening, approving, and registering applicants. It appears that the fiscal impact of these requirements can be absorbed with existing resources.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

The bill requires the DOC to allow nonprofit faith-based, business and professional, civic, and community organizations that want to provide inmate reentry services to apply for registration. The bill does not require that this registration is a prerequisite to provide services or volunteer with the DOC, nor does it require other types of organizations to apply or be registered with the DOC.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates section 944.8025 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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