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## Task Force on Jail and Prison Overcrowding Presents Report

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Governor Jennifer M. Granholm was recently presented with the final report from the Michigan Task Force on Jail and Prison Overcrowding.

"Members of the task force have worked diligently reviewing the capacity concerns of the state's prisons and jails and have developed strategies for a more effective and efficient utilization of jail and prison resources without compromising public safety," Granholm said. "I appreciate their efforts and am anxious to review the task force's solutions to Michigan's incarceration issues."

The task force included criminal justice professionals representing local, county and state interests. This included representatives from the Michigan Sheriffs' Association, the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan, the Michigan Association of Counties, the Michigan Department of Corrections, the Michigan Judges Association, the Michigan District Judges Association, the State Court Administrative Office, Law Enforcement and the Defense Bar.

Michigan Department of Corrections Director Patricia L. Caruso said her department is prepared to consider many of the recommendations.

"The task force has identified strategies to stabilize and ultimately reduce the growing prison and jail populations," said Caruso. "The report outlines the need for collaboration among the communities, state departments and local sheriffs' departments."

Michigan Sheriffs' Association Executive Director Terrence L. Jungel also commented on the unique and exceptional collaboration on this issue.

"To my knowledge this is the first time that all the key stakeholders have been together to discuss this problem of mutual interest," said Jungel. "This is not the end of the journey but rather the beginning."

Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan President Stuart J. Dunnings III praised the creation of the Task Force and the recommendations contained in the group's final report.

"Jail and prison overcrowding and the utilization of the limited resources available for incarceration has and will, for the foreseeable future, be one of the major dilemmas confronting those entrusted with the public safety. Governor Granholm brought together disparate groups involved in the criminal justice system. These groups had never before convened to hear the perspectives and concerns of the other major participants facing the problem of prison and jail overcrowding," said Dunnings. "I believe that we have tried to fashion remedies which may be implemented without the need for new monies."

The Judiciary also commended the Task Force and the recommendations contained in the final report.

"The Task Force Report appears to be a comprehensive and practical outline of the options available to all of us to address our jail and prison overcrowding problem," said Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor. "Jail and prison overcrowding compromise the integrity of our criminal justice system in many ways. The Supreme Court is committed to collaborating in any way possible to alleviate the overcrowding problem while continuing to protect the safety of our citizens. We will review those Task Force recommendations that address court practices and procedures and will actively participate in the state's efforts to reduce overcrowding."

Michigan Judges Association President Thomas Eveland said, "I believe that most members of the Michigan judiciary are committed to utilizing treatment and community corrections programs, where appropriate, in lieu of jail and prison commitments, so that these facilities can be available for those offenders who pose the greatest risk to our communities."

Some of the substantive recommendations from the task force include:

Reviewing jail rosters to identify offenders that could be safely diverted from jail or cases that could be expedited and increase the use of diversion programs.

Encourage the use of citations, appearance tickets, fines, community service and restitution in lieu of incarceration as appropriate alternatives to jail for nonviolent, low-risk offenders who are not a threat to public safety.

Increase the number of residential placement services for offenders who are in jail because there are no treatment or secure settings available.

Enhance pretrial services programs using risk and needs assessment tools to determine an offender's current risk of failure to appear or risk of recidivism when setting bond and use new technology such as electronic monitoring while applying the least restrictive and cost-effective measure to ensure compliance.

Re-evaluate eligibility criteria for community-based residential services.

Increase collaboration among courts, law enforcement, corrections and mental health agencies to identify, divert and treat mentally ill offenders.

Enhance jail services and diversion programs for mentally ill offenders, especially those awaiting forensic examination while training officers and other personnel to recognize signs of mental illness.

Reduce recidivism through the Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative and encourage re-entry initiatives at local levels

Assess county jail capacity to determine whether there is a need for expansions while focusing on providing flexible responses to a diverse offender population.

A final copy of the report is available at [www.michigan.gov/gov](http://www.michigan.gov/gov)

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