

Analysis  
**Department of Corrections**  
Assessment of Oregon's Prison Footprint

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**Analyst:** Julie Neburka

**Request:** Acknowledge receipt of a report on an assessment of Oregon's prison footprint.

**Analysis:** As Oregon's prison population began to decline over the past several years, it became apparent that the state could potentially operate fewer prison facilities. In the budget report for SB 5723 (2020 2nd Special Session), the Legislature sought the following information and professional expertise from the Department of Corrections:

**BUDGET NOTE:** Oregon's declining prison population requires an assessment of the state's prison footprint. The Department of Corrections (DOC) is directed to assess the state's prison system and report its findings to the Legislature. This assessment is to include physical plant conditions, including major repairs planned, the volume and estimated cost of deferred maintenance, and operating costs for utilities; operating conditions, including staff recruitment and retention considerations, the availability of health care services for adults in custody, and transportation and logistics costs; programming provided at each facility; and any other factors the agency deems relevant to prison capacity, costs, and efficient operations.

Based on this assessment, on relevant prison population factors, and incorporating best practices for corrections outcomes, the agency shall include in its report recommendations to the Legislature for re-shaping Oregon's prison footprint. The report shall include recommendations for prison closures, including the order in which institutions should close and the timeframes and resources necessary for closure. DOC shall report to the Legislature with its assessment and recommendations no later than January 1, 2021.

The Department of Corrections has assessed the state's prison system and has submitted a comprehensive report detailing conditions and operations at each institution, prison population demographics, how siting decisions for Oregon's prisons were made, prison bed capacity, and other relevant facts to support decision-making about the continued operation of the state's prison facilities. As an appendix to the report, the agency included the ten-year strategic plan completed in July 2020 by the DLR Group, which provides a more in-depth examination of the operation and functionality of DOC's current facilities, as well as financial estimates of the agency's strategic and aspirational goals for better health care, mental health, and geriatric facilities for adults in custody and improvements to existing facilities benefiting both adults in custody and DOC staff.

The Legislative Fiscal Office notes that the Governor's 2021-23 budget proposal, in which three prisons are designated to be closed, preempted that part of the budget note which sought recommendations for the order in which state prisons might be closed. As the agency's capital and deferred maintenance requirements remain considerable, however, the report can be anticipated to usefully inform decisions about future operational and capital construction requests.

**Legislative Fiscal Office Recommendation:** Acknowledge receipt of the report.

## Department of Corrections McDonald

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**Request:** Report on the State’s prison system, with respect to the declining prison population, operations and current prison footprint, by the Department of Corrections (DOC).

**Recommendation:** Acknowledge receipt of the report.

**Discussion:** The budget report for Senate Bill 5723 (2020 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Session) directs DOC to assess the state’s prison system and current prison footprint against the declining prison population and report its findings to the Legislature. The budget note reads as follows:

“... This assessment is to include physical plant conditions, including major repairs planned, the volume and estimated cost of deferred maintenance, and operating costs for utilities; operating conditions, including staff recruitment and retention considerations, the availability of health care services for adults in custody, and transportation and logistics costs; programming provided at each facility; and any other factors the agency deems relevant to prison capacity, costs, and efficient operations.

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In the report, DOC illustrates the change in Oregon’s prison population from 1989 to 2020, including details on the aging population of adults in custody (AICs). Regarding the facilities, DOC provides some history of where, why and how prisons were built, the comparative conditions of the fourteen institutions and the current deferred maintenance needs in each. Bed capacity is discussed in detail, including how types of capacity are calculated (e.g. built capacity, emergency bed capacity, etc.) and how housing populations are defined (e.g. general population, special housing, etc.). To address some of the agency’s current changes and challenges, the effect of the pandemic on both DOC’s footprint and staffing is included in the report, as well as the potential impact of 2021 sentencing legislation addressing systemic racism and equity. Following this system overview is a section containing detailed information specific to each individual institution.

The report concludes with a summary of considerations and DOC’s recommendations to policy makers in regard to reducing Oregon’s prison footprint. In the report, DOC introduces the concept of a “Quadruple Aim” for corrections: lower recidivism, public safety cost effectiveness, improved staff experience, and humanization and normalization for AICs. DOC asks policy makers to consider how the design of the facility supports the Quadruple Aim when assessing an institution’s long-term place in Oregon’s prison footprint.



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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February 25, 2021

The Honorable Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
900 Court Street NE  
H-178 State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Dear Co-Chairpersons:

I am pleased to present the Oregon Department of Corrections' (DOC) assessment of the state's prison footprint.

## **Nature of the Request**

DOC requests acknowledgment of this report as requested in the budget note attached to Senate Bill 5723 (2020).

### *Budget Note*

Oregon's declining prison population requires an assessment of the state's prison footprint. The Department of Corrections (DOC) is directed to assess the state's prison system and report its findings to the Legislature. This assessment is to include physical plant conditions – including major repairs planned – the volume and estimated cost of deferred maintenance, and operating costs for utilities; operating conditions – including staff recruitment and retention considerations, the availability of health care services for adults in custody, and transportation and logistics costs; programming provided at each facility; and any other factors the agency deems relevant to prison capacity, costs, and efficient operations. Based on this assessment, relevant prison population factors, and incorporating best practices for corrections outcomes, the agency shall include in its report recommendations to the Legislature for re-shaping Oregon's prison footprint. The report shall include recommendations for prison closures, including the order in which institutions should close and the timeframes and resources necessary for closure. DOC shall report to the Legislature with its assessment and recommendations no later than January 1, 2021.

### **Budget Report**

The agency is experiencing the most dramatic decline in prison population in history. This report provides an opportunity to review and assess the prison system with a comprehensive lens. This report highlights:

- The number of emergency beds which will remain in DOC's prison system;
- A comparative assessment of the condition of each prison;
- DOC's recommended framework to assess any future closures; and
- An institution-by-institution guide to provide a better understanding of each facility.

### **Action Requested**

DOC requests acknowledgement of this report as requested in the budget note attached to SB 5723 (2020).

### **Legislation Affected**

None.

Thank you for your interest in the department, the historical drivers of where DOC prisons are located and the principles that drove their construction, and the future needs of DOC's aging population of adults in custody.

I look forward to discussing the state's prison footprint of the future. Please let me know if you have questions or need any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colette S. Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Colette S. Peters  
Director