

ACT No. 342

Regular Session, 2014

HOUSE BILL NO. 781

BY REPRESENTATIVE THIBAUT

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AN ACT

To enact Part I-E of Chapter 7 of Title 15 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 15:745 through 745.3, relative to the reentry of offenders who are housed in parish jails; to create an Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program; to provide for the establishment of a pilot program in Pointe Coupee Parish; to provide that the program shall be maintained by the Pointe Coupee Parish Sheriff; to provide offenders with assistance to facilitate reentry into society following incarceration; to provide for the criteria for development of the pilot program; to provide for an advisory council to assist with the implementation of the pilot program; to provide for the membership of the council; to provide for a report of program results; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. Part I-E of Chapter 7 of Title 15 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, comprised of R.S. 15:745 through 745.3, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

PART I-E. OFFENDER REENTRY SUPPORT

§745. Short title

This Part shall be known as the "Offender Reentry Support Act".

§745.1. Declaration of public policy

A. The goals of incarceration in the criminal justice system are as follows:

- (1) To protect the citizens of the state of Louisiana.
- (2) To punish conduct which is defined as criminal by the legislature.
- (3) To deter future conduct which is defined as criminal by the legislature.
- (4) To rehabilitate offenders so that they may be reintroduced into society as law-abiding citizens.

1 B. The legislature recognizes that when ex-offenders return to their
2 communities and families, they face numerous challenges to their successful reentry
3 into the community. Among these challenges, the most difficult to overcome are the
4 barriers to employment.

5 C. It is the intention of the legislature that this Part will provide opportunities
6 to break the cycle of criminal recidivism, increase public safety, and assist the
7 growing population of criminal offenders reentering the community to establish a
8 self-sustaining life through opportunities in employment.

9 D. The legislature hereby declares that it shall be the public policy of this
10 state to promote initiatives that will provide ex-offenders with the support and
11 services necessary to allow them to find employment and make healthy connections
12 with their families and communities. Such initiatives can help ex-offenders to
13 become productively engaged with their communities, to work and support their
14 families, and thus make both their communities safer and their families economically
15 secure.

16 E. The legislature further recognizes the excellence that the standardized
17 reentry programs developed by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections
18 have had on the successful reentry of many ex-offenders into their communities. As
19 a result of these successes, the legislature believes that it is equally important to
20 replicate such programs in local and regional correctional facilities where
21 statistically larger numbers of offenders are released each year.

22 F. The sheriff of Pointe Coupee Parish has already initiated a reentry project
23 at the Pointe Coupee Detention Center through a public-private venture. The
24 legislature believes that establishing a pilot program at this local facility would be
25 an efficient use of available resources.

26 G. In balancing the legitimate needs of law enforcement agencies and the
27 desire to facilitate reentry opportunities to individuals who have paid their debts to
28 society, the Legislature of Louisiana enacts the provisions of this Part and authorizes
29 the sheriff for the parish of Pointe Coupee to implement a pilot program which shall
30 be called the "Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program".

1 §745.2. Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program; establishment; participating
 2 correctional institution; content; administration; implementation; reporting

3 A. The "Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program" is hereby created and
 4 established within the Pointe Coupee Sheriff's Office.

5 B. The program shall consist of all of the following components:

6 (1) An Offender Rehabilitation and Accountability Plan that is specific to
 7 each offender housed at the Pointe Coupee Detention Center and provides for all of
 8 the following:

9 (a) Engages the offender personally in the transition to release, sets clear and
 10 defined goals and expectations, and affords access to programs and services that will
 11 meet the individual's assessed risks and needs.

12 (b) Assists the offender in resolving any behavioral issues he may have,
 13 including access to counseling for substance abuse, anger and aggression, antisocial
 14 behavior, cognitive deficits, domestic violence, and lack of parenting skills all as
 15 needed by the offender.

16 (c) Assesses the offender throughout incarceration to determine progress and
 17 achievement of the goals and expectations established for that offender.

18 (d) Introduces the offender to stakeholders in the community where the
 19 offender will be returning upon release to reinforce law-abiding and responsible
 20 behavior.

21 (2) An education and job skills training plan specific to each offender housed
 22 at the Pointe Coupee Detention Center. Education and training provided within this
 23 plan shall be developed in partnership with employers and educational institutions
 24 within Pointe Coupee Parish, and any other appropriate parishes, to ensure that the
 25 types of instruction provided aligns with the needs of employers in the region that
 26 are willing to hire ex-offenders. When possible and appropriate, transitional
 27 on-the-job training should occur prior to release from incarceration.

28 (3) An employment preparation plan that, prior to release, will provide the
 29 offender with skills training that addresses proper work ethic, communication,
 30 attitude, personal responsibility, and workplace culture. If required, the offender

1 shall receive instruction in completing computerized applications, assistance with
2 resume development, or assistance in job searches. The Louisiana Workforce
3 Commission shall assist the Pointe Coupee Sheriff's Office in providing these
4 services.

5 (4) A post-release support plan that will provide each ex-offender a single
6 point of contact for assistance with the needs and challenges that are encountered
7 after being discharged from the detention center. This assistance shall be made
8 available to the ex-offender for a period of twelve months following release. Support
9 provided shall include, at a minimum and as needed, help in obtaining the following:

10 (a) Necessary identification documents.

11 (b) Housing.

12 (c) Transportation.

13 (d) Substance abuse treatment.

14 (e) Family and domestic violence counseling.

15 (f) Parenting.

16 (g) Health care.

17 (h) Child care.

18 (i) Insurance.

19 C. The sheriff is hereby authorized to research potential funding sources for
20 this pilot program and obtain funds from any private, federal, state, and local sources
21 available for such initiatives as are developed and undertaken by the program. Such
22 funds shall be used exclusively for the purposes of the program.

23 D. Within twenty-four months following initial implementation of the
24 "Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program", the sheriff shall submit to the House
25 Committee on Administration of Criminal Justice and the Senate Committee on
26 Judiciary C a comprehensive report regarding the implementation of the pilot
27 program, funding obtained for its implementation, the progress of offenders and
28 ex-offenders under the program, and a recommendation for continuation, expansion,
29 or termination of the program.

1 §745.3. Advisory council; establishment; duties; membership

2 A. To assist with the creation, development and implementation of the
3 "Offender Reentry Support Pilot Program", the sheriff shall create and appoint
4 members to an advisory council. The council will assist the sheriff in the
5 formulation of offender reentry strategies for the design of inmate education,
6 treatment, and rehabilitation programs to provide sufficient skills to offenders that
7 will likely result in their successful employment and reentry into their communities,
8 reducing their chances of returning to prison after release.

9 B. The programs shall be developed after evaluation and identification of the
10 specific needs for reentry services within the detention center. The advisory council
11 shall monitor these programs for their effectiveness and the outcomes achieved as
12 they relate to such strategies. The sheriff may use any necessary resources of state
13 and local agencies, academic institutions, and other research organizations to develop
14 the strategies.

15 C. The advisory council's membership shall be from the region served by the
16 sheriff's office and shall consist of the following members:

17 (1) Two representatives having managerial and business experience.

18 (2) A representative from the Greater Pointe Coupee Chamber of Commerce.

19 (3) Representatives from each of the educational and training institutions in
20 the region.

21 (4) Three representatives from community service organizations.

22 (5) Representatives from any state and local agencies relevant to addressing
23 the pre-release and post-release needs of offenders.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____