Correctional System Reform – Progress and Additional Opportunities

Testimony to the Little Hoover Commission
By Matthew Cate
Secretary, California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation

I would first like to say that it is an honor to be the Secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Leading a dedicated team for the last two and a half years in its effort to reduce crime and give offenders the opportunity to improve lives for the better has been an incredibly rewarding experience.

Over the last two years, the state of California has experienced one of the worst economic crises since the Great Depression. However, through these very difficult times we have implemented significant initiatives and reforms which have kept CDCR moving forward while maintaining our highest priority, public safety.

Budget

Our headquarters' staffing positions have increased since the implementation of Senate Bill (SB) 737. In fiscal year (FY) 2004-05 the number of budgeted positions for headquarters was 3,201.3. This number increased to 4,466 positions by FY 2008-09. In realizing the severe financial crisis facing the State, I directed my management team to implement several rounds of reductions. We have reduced over 600 positions from headquarters, which resulted in 4,058.2 net positions, a net reduction of 407.8 positions from FY 2008-09. The reduction of over 600 positions is offset by positions that were added by necessity to critical projects such as the Strategic Offender Management System, the Assembly Bill (AB) 900 construction program, and the Female Rehabilitative Community Correctional Center.

In the last two years, we have reduced the number of positions in almost every entity in headquarters. In most cases we have been able to eliminate vacant positions, or find new jobs for impacted employees. We have eliminated or consolidated a number of offices over the past year, including the Office of Risk Management, the Office of Strategic Planning, and the Office of Court Compliance.

In light of budget reductions of $1.8 billion over the last three years, CDCR has done a very good job of providing programming to the maximum number of offenders possible with the resources provided, implementing significant parole reforms to enhance public safety, and becoming more efficient as a Department.

Strategic Plan

As the Secretary, I am determined to improve this organization through a strategic plan. In light of the many emergencies that arise in the corrections field, it would be easy to lose sight of planning for the future. I do not want to lead an organization that only responds to events and does not have a compelling vision.

The strategic plan is the result of a collaborative effort among thousands of CDCR employees and many stakeholders. The development of the strategic plan included reaching out to multiple internal and external constituents for input, feedback, and ideas to capture diverse perspectives, while identifying common themes for change.

It was critical to the strategic planning process to begin by analyzing the Department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Approximately 40 CDCR staff members participated in drafting the four goals and 26 objectives in the strategic plan. The staff members were a blend of multi-disciplinary staff from the field and headquarters to ensure we had the greatest knowledge, experience and diversity in our perspective.

Several important processes have been put in place to ensure the strategic plan is implemented. Work action plans for each of the objectives have been completed. Approximately 150 staff members from various divisions throughout CDCR wrote the work action plans and set the implementation target date for each objective. These targets are being used to guide work action plan teams as they develop the detailed plans which will be used to achieve the objectives. The detailed work action plans will also be used during the implementation phase of the strategic plan for resource planning and personnel assignments.

Additionally, executive staff members have been assigned as sponsors and team leads ("champions") for each objective. The sponsors are responsible for ensuring the work action plans are fully developed and implemented and for addressing resources needs and conflicts as they arise. The team leader guides the staff responsible for developing and implementing the work action plans and for reporting progress to their sponsors and the Department's senior executives. As the Secretary, I have the ability to track our progress through an electronic "dashboard" accessible on my computer and I am kept updated as steps are completed.

CDCR's strategic plan does not address every CDCR activity, project, program or function; rather, the plan focuses on strategies which are seen as key for organizational process improvement over the next five years. In developing the plan a conscious choice was made to limit the number of goals and objectives and select the most important ones.

Parole Reform

The Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) has embarked upon a major reform initiative that will allow CDCR to better protect our communities, reduce recidivism, and launch a paradigm shift that will facilitate long-term behavioral changes within our offender population.

On October 13, 2009, a Parole Reform Task Force was convened with the objective of aligning our current practices with those that have proven to positively impact offender

reintegration. In partnership with the Center for Effective Public Policy, the task force reviewed and thoughtfully considered evidence-based practices, lessons learned from both internal and external stakeholders and research from over two decades on effective offender management strategies to produce its recommendations. A pilot in four parole regions is currently under way.

One of the key components of the reform includes a reduction of the average caseload from 70:1 to 48:1. Research from the past two decades has proven that excessive caseloads contribute to the inability of a parole agent to effectively manage offenders under his or her supervision. DAPO is currently in the process of reducing the caseloads for parole agents statewide and expects the project to be completed within the next two years. In addition, DAPO is adding field training officers and field supervisors to all regions in order to improve training and supervision of our field agents.

DAPO has utilized active GPS to enhance the monitoring and surveillance of 1,000 high risk gang members. This enables parole agents to closely track and monitor the whereabouts of gang members, while utilizing the system to be alerted to circumstances when offenders enter prohibited areas and/or fail to abide by curfew restrictions.

In addition, DAPO has place 1,200 electronic monitoring units for alternative sanctions enabling the Board of Parole Hearings or parole staff to utilize home detention as a remedial sanction in circumstances where the offender's behavior does not rise to the level where a return to custody is warranted or as a means by which to enforce curfew.

Most importantly, DAPO is embarking on a new model of supervision – one that focuses on the successful reintegration of parolees back into society. In this model, we will be measuring success based on whether offenders are employed, sober, in a stable living arrangement and crime free.

I am also very proud of the work we are doing with the Re-Entry Courts for offenders with substance abuse and mental health issues. The SB 18 (3X) (Penal Code § 3015) paved the way for the development/expansion of parolee Re-Entry Courts throughout the states to be used as diversionary programs for eligible parolees. CDCR has established memorandums of understanding with the courts and expects to implement this project in early 2011. This has required a tremendous amount of work, but I believe the results will benefit both the offenders and the State.

Juvenile Justice

Since the reorganization, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has undergone a metamorphosis. For several years, the DJJ's population has been declining from a peak of slightly more than 10,000 youth a decade ago to approximately 1,300 youth currently. This is the result of many policy changes at the State level. The DJJ population represents less than one percent of the youths arrested in California and it

includes youth with the most violent backgrounds and who have exceptional treatment needs that cannot be addressed by county programs. Some of the characteristics of the DJJ's current population include youth that have history of violent and serious crime; are in need of mental health services, substance abuse treatment, sexual behavior treatment services; and youth that are being educated through individualized special education programs.

In October 2010 the Legislature passed AB 1628 shifting the juvenile parole supervision to county probation supervision and phasing out DJJ parole until eliminated in 2014. Further, this will additionally reduce the facility population as parole violators, with few exceptions until 2014, will serve revocation time in county care and custody and not return to a DJJ facility.

Farrell

The DJJ is in substantial compliance with 84 percent of the 841 action items called for in the six *Farrell* remedial plans, essentially meaning it has successfully completed those policy and program changes according to audits conducted by court-appointed experts. Those experts have also found the DJJ in partial compliance with another 5 percent of the required actions for a total compliance rate of 89 percent. In 2008 that total was only 65 percent.

Female Offender Programs and Services

I am proud of our Female Offender Programs and Services Mission (FOPS). We have continued to make incredible strides in ensuring CDCR is providing gender responsive treatment to the female offenders in spite of the current fiscal climate. The current accomplishments are:

- October 2010 FOPS received the final report from Pat Van Vorrhis on the recommendations for the new female classification score system.
- October 2010 the first summit for children of incarcerated parents took place.
- October 2010 contract awarded for 600 Female CCF beds with SAP services.
- September 2010 evidence based Correctional Program Checklist (CPC) audit performed at the FRMSC by the Office of Research.
- July 2010 began the implementation of the Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) at the Female Prisons.

Unfortunately budget constraints prevented the activation of the Female Rehabilitative Community Correctional Center (FRCCC) and the Female Residential Multi Service Center (FRMSC). However, we still held the commitment of providing substance abuse program treatment beds at all three female institutions.

In addition, FOPS has assumed the contract for the Second Chance Women's Re-Entry Court located in Los Angeles County, and this program services 30 female offenders eligible for the alternative sentencing in Drug Court.

We have been able to continue the Chowchilla Family Express, and the Get On The Bus contracts are still in effect, which provide family visiting transportation services to the female valley institutions. These very valuable services assist in the family reunification process, which has shown to reduce recidivism.

Ongoing rehabilitative gender responsive/trauma informed efforts are going forth with the Gender Responsive Strategies Commission (GRSC). The budget shortfall did stall the GRSC meetings, however, meetings were held January, 2008, April, 2009, and October 2009. Two meetings were scheduled April 2010 and October 2010. FOPS currently is in the planning stages for the scheduled GRSC meeting that will be held on December 8-9, 2010. FOPS is also completing research on webinar and teleconferencing to have an alternative in ensuring that GRSC will go forth regardless of any budget constraints.

FOPS staff have begun the process of implementation of the Master Plan for Female Offenders. FOPS Associate Director meets bi-weekly with the Wardens and other stakeholders to ensure the necessary steps are taking place to fully implement the Master Plan recommendations. The Department will continue to ensure the Master Plan for Female Offenders remains a priority by continuing to meet with stakeholders and providing updates to the GRSC.

Going Forward

In light of the Legislative Analyst's Office recent announcement of a $25 billion deficit in California, it is imperative the CDCR continue to focus on accomplishing its public safety mission while holding the line on spending. The best way to accomplish that goal is to lower the recidivism rates of our offenders – thereby reducing the prison and parole population. Helping today's inmates become productive citizens tomorrow not only reduces crime, it also saves precious budget dollars and actually adds to the tax-payer base. Acomplishing this goal requires a long-term commitment to programs and strategies that have been proven to work. These include:

- expansion of academic and vocational education, drug and alcohol programs with aftercare;
- increasing the critical role our community partners and volunteers play in helping CDCR increase and improve program availability;
- continue to develop "evidence-based" corrections with our new parole model which is based on the risk and needs of offenders;
- work collaboratively with state and local law enforcement agencies, and;
- maintain our best performance measurement system (COMPSTAT), which makes department-wide data accessible to managers and supervisors so that it

can be analyzed on an ongoing comparative basis and used to track key performance measures and drive efficiency.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony. I look forward to attending your hearing on November 18, 2010 to further discuss these issues.