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CRIME REDUCTION ACT OF 2009 TO REDUCE PRISON COSTS, REHABILITATE OFFENDERS AND KEEP COMMUNITIES SAFE

CHICAGO – Gov. Pat Quinn has signed legislation aimed at ending the cycle of locking up non-violent people for short periods of time and then sending them back into their home communities where they commit more non-violent crimes and return to the expensive state prison system. This should save money and reduce crime.

The Crime Reduction Act of 2009 (Senate Bill 1289) will lead to an assessment of the public safety risks posed by most state prisoners and recommendations on what therapies treatment can help them succeed outside prison walls. It also will create an Adult Redeploy Illinois program, modeled after the successful juvenile Redeploy Illinois program, offering monetary incentives to help communities pay for rehabilitation services and drug and mental health treatment of nonviolent offenders who remain in their own communities instead of being sent to state prisons.

“Illinois should punish and keep dangerous people in prison where they belong, and at the same time we can reduce the cost of a so-called corrections system that really doesn’t correct anything,” Paula Wolff, Senior Executive at Chicago Metropolis 2020, said Thursday. “Other states have tested and proven that rehabilitation of certain prisoners leads to lower costs and safer communities.

“One out of five people sent to Illinois prisons are there for nine weeks or less,” she said. “Most get little to no help with kicking drug and alcohol addictions. There’s no way to train them for jobs or show them how to keep a job if they should find one after release. When they leave, they go back home with a criminal record, hang with the same circle of friends and pick up where they left off. More than half commit crimes and head back to expensive state prisons within three years of their release.”

The legislation will expand the use of drug prisons, like the Sheridan Correctional Center that reopened in 2004 as a medium-security prison devoted entirely to substance abuse treatment and has become a national model. There also will be a rigorous evaluation of the drug and education services in prisons.

The legislation was drafted by Chicago Metropolis 2020, a business-based civic organization promoting long-term planning and smart investment in the Chicago region and working for better outcomes in our legal and corrections systems. Technical assistance was provided by the Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States and the Vera Institute of Justice. For a fact sheet about the Crime Reduction Act of 2009, go to www.chicagometropolis2020.org.

SB 1289 was sponsored by Senators Kwame Raoul, D-Chicago; A.J. Wihelmi, D-Joliet; and Heather Steans, D-Chicago. House sponsors were Reps. William D. Burns, D-Chicago; Jim Durkin, R-Western Springs; Arthur L. Turner, D-Chicago; Michael G. Connelly, R-Lisle; and Monique D. Davis, D-Chicago.

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