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# JUSTICE CENTER INITIATIVE CRIME CONTROL & PREVENTION DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

To: Mayor John Hickenlooper

Submitted by: Councilman Rick Garcia, Wayne Vaden, and Frank Moya, Co-Chairs, Alternatives to Sentencing Committee

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The City is poised at a critical juncture in determining the future and efficacy of its criminal justice system. Replacing the old, out-dated and unsafe jail is critical, but it is only a part of what needs to be done to re-engineer the justice system to increase public safety and reduce victimization in the City and County of Denver.

To promote public safety, proven crime control strategies need to be implemented to reduce offender recidivism. The Justice Center should be part of a larger Crime Control Initiative that systemically reforms the entire justice system. A major goal of this crime control strategy should be to match offenders with the types of research-based sanctions that have proven successful in reducing their return to criminal activity.

A crime control and prevention approach not only enhances public safety in Denver, but it also makes financial sense. For example, the jail is currently a revolving door for too many offenders with mental health or substance abuse needs that are not being addressed. A community-based program in Denver estimates its costs for treating offenders with mental health needs at \$6,400, compared to an annual operation cost of approximately \$26,280 per jail bed. While better data is needed about the average length of stay for such offenders to estimate overall cost benefits and bed savings, it is clear that successful treatment and diversion programs are cost effective alternatives to incarceration. Not only can such programs reduce the need for new jail beds but their comprehensive programming address underlying offender risk factors (such as mental health and substance abuse). This reduces the chance that these offenders will re-offend thus reducing future system costs, while improving public safety and neighborhood quality of life.

The good news is that a wide range of evidenced-based treatment programs, sanctioning options and justice system “best practices” have proven successful across the country. These crime control and prevention strategies are currently available to policymakers to reduce crime in the City and County of Denver. The Alternatives to Sentencing Committee reviewed 19 such non-residential sanction options and made preliminary recommendations about specific priorities that could be implemented immediately to help alleviate the City’s overcrowding crisis. These *preliminary* recommendations— The Ten Point Crime Control & Prevention Priorities--are outlined in the attached document with estimated timelines for implementation and cost benefits if available. (Note: cost savings were conservatively estimated and do not include the cost saving inherent in reduced recidivism.)

The Alternatives to Sentencing Committee, however, quickly recognized that to re-engineer Denver’s justice system to an outcome-driven crime control system, policymakers need critical data about Denver’s offender population. Some of this information about the jail population will be available in the next two months through research currently underway by the City’s consulting team from the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), headed by Bill Woodward.

The Alternatives to Sentencing Committee will continue to refine its sanction and program recommendations as data becomes available. In the meantime, the Committee Co-chairs respectively submit the following *interim* recommendations for inclusion as part of the overall Justice Center package:

### **Overall Justice System Goal Recommendations**

- A. Establish a **Crime Control & Prevention Commission** to conduct analysis and strategic planning, to establish performance measures and outcomes, to hold the system accountable for achieving outcomes, and to oversee implementation of the system’s sanctioning philosophy and policies. Specific tasks for the Commission include: analyzing offender flow and “bed” usage; reviewing effectiveness of programs in reducing recidivism; developing policy recommendations to utilize jail beds for the most serious offenders and to reduce the “revolving door; ” investing in proven programming to reduce recidivism; completing regular mapping of the criminal

justice system to insure tax dollars are spent in accordance with evidence based practice; and make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council designed to improve public safety and reduce victimization.

*Implementation Timeline: Immediate\*\**

- B. Create an initial **\$5 million Crime Control & Prevention Fund** for evidence-based sanctions and options that effectively divert or reduce jail bed use

*Implementation Timeline: Mid-term*

- C. Convene stakeholders and community leaders to establish a **sanctioning philosophy/goal for the justice system** to focus reform work

*Implementation Timeline: Immediate*

- D. Obtain the following **data and refine the Ten-Point Crime Control & Prevention Program** accordingly:
  - a. Research who is currently in the jail and why they are being held. Then design programs or processes to increase the probability of reducing recidivism while maintaining public safety.
  - b. Assess a sample of offenders to determine criminogenic needs (factors that research shows need to be addressed to impact recidivism)
  - c. Map offender flow through the system to identify decision points and timelines for moving cases through the process for comparison to national standards
  - d. Conduct inventory of existing programs and whether programs address criminogenic needs of Denver's offender population

*Implementation Timeline: Mid-term*

## Ten Point Crime Control & Prevention Program Priorities\*\*\*

### *Pre-Trial Sentencing Options and Programs*

1. Expand the successful **pre-trial supervision component** of the former **District Drug Court** to increase the number of offenders—including county misdemeanants--diverted from jail for drug offenses by approximately 1,000-1,200 annually to save an estimated 96 jail beds or about \$2.5 million in operating costs

*Implementation Timeline: Immediate*

2. **Increase utilization of the Electronic Monitoring Program** for approximately 200 pre-trial detainees to save an estimated 17 beds or about \$446,760 in operating costs

*Implementation Timeline: Immediate*

3. Obtain statutory (C.R.S. 16-4-104) authority for the Denver Court to impose an **alternative 10% cash bond** in certain non-high-risk cases. (Cost estimates and savings not yet available, but could impact those who can provide the cash percentage, but who are unable to obtain financing through a bonding agent due to lack of collateral.)

*Implementation Timeline: Immediate 2005 General Assembly*

### *Alternatives to Incarceration*

4. **Increase utilization of Sheriff's Home Detention Program** to capacity, or about 740 detainees per year, to save an estimated 31 beds for a cost savings of \$814,680

*Implementation Timeline: Immediate*

5. Transition certain **sentenced misdemeanants** who have served at least 75% of their sentence to **Electronic Monitoring** to save 5 beds, or about \$131,400

*Implementation Timeline: Mid-term*

\*\*\*These priorities were developed by the full Alternatives to Sentencing Committee at its meeting on 12/4/05

### ***Community Assimilation***

6. Expand **CITAP to 250 additional offenders with mental health needs** at a cost of \$1.6 million, or \$6,400 per year per offender. (It costs \$26,280 to incarcerate an offender for one year.)

*Implementation Timeline: Mid-term*

7. Provide **re-entry and employment assistance** to people leaving the Denver County Jail to help them successfully re-integrate into communities

*Implementation Timeline: Mid-term*

8. Provide **accredited coursework and treatment within the Denver County Jail** to those who are incarcerated for offenses related to substance abuse and domestic violence

*Implementation Timeline: Long-term*

### ***Criminal Justice Management***

9. Establish a **Crime Control & Prevention Commission** by the executive and legislative branches to monitor implemented recommendations, evaluate their impact, and monitor ongoing management of the jail population including ways to reduce it through diversion, process improvements, and alternative sanctions

*Implementation Timeline: Immediate*

10. Establish a **standing semi-monthly meeting** of criminal justice executive leadership with the Mayor to create a data-driven Comstat-type process to manage the jail population

*Implementation Timeline: Immediate*

**\*\*Legend for Implementation Schedule**

Immediate = Now thru one year

Mid-term=Now thru two years

Long-term=Now thru three years