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Representative Nixon Introduces Bill to Reduce Recidivism in Florida

HB 1243 expands incentives for participating in rehabilitation programs, lowering recidivism rates to increase public safety

Tallahassee, Fla. – Representative Angie Nixon (D-Jacksonville) today introduced legislation to improve Florida’s criminal justice system by incentivizing rehabilitation that reduces recidivism. Current law limits incentives for people sentenced on low-level offenses to participate in rehabilitative programs, despite their effectiveness in keeping people from returning to prison and helping them join the workforce as productive members of society upon release. The bill, filed today, would expand rehabilitation credits for participating in educational programs to improve safety within and outside of prisons by encouraging people to prepare themselves for successful reentry back into communities.

Rehabilitation credits are a proven way of reducing recidivism that over 30 states – including 80 percent of southern states – have implemented to improve safety. The states utilizing such credits have experienced reductions in recidivism identical to or greater than those that do not provide them, while reducing wasteful prison spending on over-incarceration.

“Floridians deserve a criminal justice system that utilizes proven approaches to keep communities safe and limits wasteful taxpayer spending,” said **Representative Angie Nixon**. “We now know that lengthy prison sentences – coupled with a lack of rehabilitative support – can increase the chances of someone returning to prison once they’re released. This bill can save our communities up to \$60 million by increasing our focus on rehabilitation, ensuring that people are held accountable and decreasing their likelihood of ever returning to prison by gaining the skills they need to succeed. Safer communities depend on expanded opportunities to break cycles of crime – and this legislation does exactly that.”

ABOUT THE BILL: **HB 1243** increases the amount of credits awarded for completing educational programs and broadens the scope of these credits to include more programs that support employment after release from prison. The bill also establishes a new discretionary earned credit for participation in work assignments, and creates eligibility for certain non-violent offenders to earn sufficient credits for early release after completing 65 percent of their sentence.

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