

Breaking Georgia's Cycle of Incarceration Act of 2024

Section I - Title

This Act may be cited as the “Breaking Georgia's Cycle of Incarceration Act”.

Section II - Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this Act is to break the cycle of incarceration within the state of Georgia by:

- **Enhancing mental health services:** Providing adequate therapy and treatment to inmates grappling with mental health issues to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.
- **Promoting reentry programs:** Establishing programs that facilitate smooth transition from prison to community life. This includes job placement, housing, and other essential services with a strong focus on workforce development.
- **Supporting substance abuse treatment:** Expanding state programs focusing on treatment rather than incarceration for inmates struggling with substance abuse.
- **Encouraging community integration:** Initiating measures involving community in helping to remove the stigma associated with being an ex-convict. This may encompass volunteer mentorship programs, local business involvement, and public education efforts.

Section III - Definitions

For the purpose of this Act, the term:

- **Mental Health Services** refers to services designed to help inmates manage or recover from mental health problems and to promote mental health well-being.
- **Reentry Programs** are initiatives designed to prepare inmates to return safely to the community and to live as law-abiding citizens.
- **Substance Abuse Treatment** refers to services provided to help individuals recover from substance abuse.
- **Community Integration** refers to the involvement of local communities in helping former inmates reintegrate into society.

Section IV - Scope and Jurisdiction

This Act applies to all persons incarcerated within the state of Georgia, including those currently serving sentences and those recently released on parole or probation.

Section V - Amendments to Existing Legislation

Wherever any law is found in conflict with the provisions of this Act, such law will be revised or repealed as necessary to ensure compliance with this Act.

Section VI - Provisions

- **Mental Health Services:** Increased funding and expansion of mental health services within correctional facilities and post-release.
- **Reentry Programs:** Development and implementation of comprehensive reentry programs focused on providing housing assistance, job placement, and other vital social services.
- **Substance Abuse Treatment:** Expansion of existing substance abuse treatment programs focusing on recovery rather than punitive measures.
- **Community Integration:** Launch of public education and awareness campaigns to reduce stigma associated with ex-convicts. Encouragement of local businesses to provide job opportunities for ex-convicts.

Section VII - Enforcement

The relevant state agencies will be responsible for enforcing this Act. They shall adopt rules, policies, and procedures necessary for the implementation of this Act.

Section VIII - Funding

Adequate funding shall be allocated from the state budget for the implementation of this Act. The relevant agencies shall seek additional funding and grants as necessary.

Section IX - Review and Reporting

The responsible agencies will report annually on the outcomes of the Act to the state legislature, including data on recidivism rates, employment rates, and other relevant measures of success.

This Act shall take effect one year after its passage into law. A review of this Act shall be carried out three years after its enforcement, with further reviews every five years thereafter.

Section X - Severability Clause

If any provision or provisions of this Act shall be held to be invalid, illegal, unenforceable or in conflict with the law of any jurisdiction, the validity, legality and enforceability of the remaining provisions shall not in any way be affected or impaired thereby.

Section XI - Supporting Research

Studies show that providing mental health services, implementing reentry programs, treating substance abuse, and encouraging community integration can significantly reduce recidivism rates (Petersilia, 2003; Wilson, Draine, Hadley, Metraux, & Evans, 2011). Evidence also shows that community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment programs are more cost-effective than incarceration (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006).

References:

- Aos, S., Miller, M., & Drake, E. (2006). Evidence-based adult corrections programs: What works and what does not. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Petersilia, J. (2003). When prisoners come home: Parole and prisoner reentry. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Wilson, A. B., Draine, J., Hadley, T., Metraux, S., & Evans, A. (2011). Examining the impact of mental illness and substance use on recidivism in a county jail. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 34(4), 264-268.