Addressing Personnel Shortages and Low Retention Rates in the Maryland Division of Corrections
Governor’s Summer Internship Program 2018

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Executive Summary

Employee burnout, excessive mandatory overtime, and disconnects between management and line staff have made for dangerous working conditions within correctional facilities in Maryland. Our policy proposal involves complimenting the Hogan Administration’s current efforts to address correctional officer shortages, as well as implementing strategies to increase employee recruitment and retention through recommendations involving a public imaging campaign, financial incentivizing, adjustments to the hiring process, and increased opportunities for professional development and organizational commitment.

- **Recommendation One:** Initiate a public imaging campaign to improve the public perception of a correctional careers in Maryland.
- **Recommendation Two:** Lower the hiring age to 18 only for part-time workers to relieve the need for overtime and staffing shortage, while keeping the age requirement for full-time correctional officers at 21 years old.
- **Recommendation Three:** Reinvest overtime expenditures into raising the salaries of Maryland correctional officers.
- **Recommendation Four:** Establish mentorship programs between line correctional staff and supervisory correctional staff to improve organizational commitment and enhance retention rates. Promote training programs designed to shift correctional officer ideology from punitive, to restorative/rehabilitative.
- **Recommendation Five:** Discontinue the use of the polygraph examination during the hiring process for correctional officers, and install a more stringent credit check and
criminal background follow-up system throughout the employment of correctional officers.

Following a qualitative analysis, our final policy proposal calls for the implementation of recommendations one, two, and three.

**Introduction**

The State of Maryland has recently undertaken efforts to comprehensively restructure and renew the criminal justice system, in order to enhance public safety while decreasing Maryland’s prison populations by reducing collateral consequences of incarceration, reducing recidivism among offenders, and enhancing cost-savings. These policy changes are reflected in the 2015 Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA,) which was enacted in October 2017. Steps taken to fulfill the goals of JRA include the use of validated risk assessment tools at multiple steps throughout the justice process, the implementation of evidence-based recidivism reduction programs both within institutions and in the community, and through the use of diversion and deflection schemes in order to better serve individuals with behavioral health needs. Properly staffed correctional facilities are required to properly fulfill these goals, and to maintain safe working conditions for personnel. In order to continue pushing Maryland forward as a model of criminal justice reform, the issue of correctional officer shortages must be addressed.

**Problem Definition**

Correctional officer (CO) position vacancies and turnover rates among COs have reached critically high levels in recent years.\(^1\) The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) reported that the Division of Corrections (DOC) had 938 vacant positions.

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\(^1\) Maryland Department of Legislative Services, *Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services: Analysis of the FY 2019 Maryland Executive Budget*, 2018.
positions as of December 2017. The CO vacancy rate in July 2017 was 11.9%. This number was down from 14.7% following the partial-closing of Maryland Correctional Institute-Hagerstown. This reduction is misleading; it does not translate to increased ability for COs to staff correctional facilities because facilities are more full from inmate transfers following the closures. Additionally, approximately 241 positions that were filled have opened since then, bringing the vacancy rate back to levels comparable to before the closure.\(^2\)

Correctional officer vacancies create a dire threat to the safety and cost-effectiveness of correctional institutions. One way in which they do this is by creating a need for excessive overtime.\(^3\) Correctional facilities have to be fully staffed at all times, so correctional officers are assigned mandatory overtime to account for vacant positions. They are legally allowed to work up to eighty hours of overtime per pay cycle.\(^4\) This much overtime, although necessary in these extreme circumstances, has ill effects on employee health and performance measures. Working excessive hours is correlated with cardiovascular issues,\(^5\) unhealthy weight gain,\(^6\) burnout (especially in “low reward jobs”),\(^7\) and a higher number of on-the-job accidents.\(^8\) According to COs and DOC officials, the recent high vacancy rates have also directly translated into more

\(^2\) Maryland Department of Legislative Services, *Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services: Analysis of the FY 2019 Maryland Executive Budget*, 2018.
\(^4\) Ibid.
inmates being supervised by less officers and officers having to work in areas that are outside of their job descriptions. According to a Facility Administrator, Metropolitan Transition Center (MTC), which is in charge of delivering approximately 10,000 meals to facilities throughout the Baltimore region each day, has correctional officers working overtime in the dietary department to account for the 65% shortage in dietary staff. Having officers work in an environment where they are not specifically trained is dangerous, and in this context, increases risks of foodborne illness and accidents.\(^9\) In prison environments, fatigue and accidents can have especially dangerous consequences. In 2016, offender-on-officer assaults increased for the first time since fiscal year (fy) 2012. They decreased slightly in 2017, but assault levels are still elevated. In fy 2017, offender homicides increased to five, the highest number since fiscal 2013. The number of correctional facility walk-offs increased from four to eleven. DPSCS attributed these safety issues to facilities being undermanned and staff being overworked.\(^10\) Additionally, overtime spending for correctional officers has increased nearly 66 percent, to $70.2 million, since 2013, according to the 2018 budget report.\(^11\)

Inadequate staffing also limits the effectiveness of correctional facility programing and treatment. The focus of recent criminal justice reform in Maryland, under Governor Hogan’s direction, has been on recidivism reduction. The goal of JRA, which Governor Hogan signed into law in 2015, is to reduce the prison population and re-invest the savings into data-driven policies and programs. Maryland is currently experiencing the largest cut in prison population in

\(^10\) Maryland Department of Legislative Services, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services: Analysis of the FY 2019 Maryland Executive Budget, 2018.
\(^11\) Maryland Department of Legislative Services, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services: Analysis of the FY 2018 Maryland Executive Budget, 2018.
the country as a result of JRA initiatives. In order for these results to continue, we will need to reform the correctional system and create an environment that is conducive to correct decision making by practitioners and to recidivism reduction. Craig Dowden’s research outlines “core correctional practices,” including appropriate reinforcement and modeling of anti-criminal activities, teaching “concrete problem-solving skills,” arranging for the appropriate correctional services for individual inmates, and having mutually respectful relationships with inmates. His research shows that all of these staff practices were associated with significant reductions in inmate rates of reoffending.\textsuperscript{12} It is clear from officer testimonies that when COs are overworked, fatigued, and fear for their safety due to understaffing, they are unable to focus on the core practices that ultimately reduce recidivism and, they are unable to effectively implement the programs outlined by JRA. Understaffing, thus, translates directly to increased recidivism.

\textbf{Origins of the Problem}

The two major contributing factors that lead to correctional officer vacancies are low recruitment of new officers and low officer retention. An occupation in corrections is not viewed as desirable, due to negative perception of its low pay, long work hours, and/or unsafe working conditions. These perceptions make it difficult to recruit officer candidates. In a survey of correctional administrators and human resources managers in forty-four correctional systems, conducted by the American Correctional Association and funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, respondents noted that inadequate pay and benefits, burdensome work hours and shift work, a shortage of qualified applicants, and undesirable location of correctional facilities are factors that render recruitment difficult. Correctional administrators are competing against

other criminal justice agencies, such as law enforcement and the federal government, who offer more attractive jobs with better benefits.\textsuperscript{13}

In addition to the position having low desirability, another problem blocking recruitment efforts in Maryland is the stringent requirements throughout the CO hiring process. Some of the stricter requirements include having to be twenty-one years old and having to pass a polygraph examination.\textsuperscript{14} The age requirement for working in a federal correctional facility is eighteen. State age requirements vary, but twenty-one is the highest requirement instituted. In 2015, polygraph testing was implemented in response to a corruption scandal among correctional officers at the Baltimore City Detention Center in 2013. This test significantly limits the eligible applicant pool and deters potential hires by prolonging the hiring process. In the period between January 2016 and October 2016, DPSCS Human Resources staff tested 2,089 people for correctional officer positions. Of those 2,089, 871 individuals moved on to the interview phase of hiring. 314 individuals were disqualified during the interview phase. Of the remaining 557 candidates who underwent background investigations, which includes a polygraph examination, a physical examination, a psychological examination, and drug testing, only sixty-three were able to be hired between January 2016 and November 1, 2016.\textsuperscript{15} Research has shown that polygraph examinations are unreliable. They may also disqualify otherwise qualified candidates who are nervous or misinterpret a question. The use of polygraph examinations is limited by the Supreme Court outside of law enforcement. Maryland is one of only seven states to use polygraph examinations as part of the state correctional officer hiring process. According to the


\textsuperscript{14} Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

\textsuperscript{15} U.S Department of Justice, \textit{Report on the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services}, 2017.
DPSCS, the cumulative pass rate for the polygraph in the 2015, 2016, and 2017 years was only 55%. Furthermore, it is unclear if polygraph examinations have reduced corruption in the state prison system since Maryland started using them in 2015.

There are many factors that lead to high CO turnover. The “chronic and serious” job stress that COs constantly experience often leads to what is known as “burnout.” Excessive overtime exacerbates the development of burnout among employees and further increases turnover in a profession that is already marked by intense stressors. Sgt. Kyle Schanholtz, a union steward who works at the Roxbury Correctional Institution in Hagerstown, told The Washington Post that maintaining order at the state’s lockup facilities has become increasingly challenging with a personnel shortage and officers feeling overworked, particularly from overtime. Schanholtz says anywhere from fifteen to thirty-five officers generally work overtime on a given shift. “It’s a hard and dangerous environment,” Schanholtz said. “And when you’re forced to stay in it longer, it takes a mental toll.” There are not many opportunities to develop professionally and scarce resources available to help officers dealing with high stress/mental health issues.

**Current Efforts**

The Hogan Administration is aware of the staffing problem and has been implementing policies to address the issue. We applaud the administration for taking action, however, many of these initiatives will only be short-term band-aid projects to address recruitment and retention

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16 Maryland Department of Legislative Services, *Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services: Analysis of the FY 2019 Maryland Executive Budget*, 2018.
19 Ibid.
issues. Our policy proposals seek to compliment Governor Hogan’s efforts and provide a more long-term solution that addresses the root causes of the issue.

In 2016, the Maryland General Assembly passed and Gov. Hogan signed into law the Justice Reinvestment Act. The goal of this legislation was to reduce the prison population and re-invest the savings back into the community in programs to help keep potential offenders out of prison and give offenders reentering society the tools they need to stay out of prison. Maryland has led the country in decreasing prison populations by eliminating nearly ten percent between 2016 and 2017.\(^{20}\) This decline has allowed Maryland to cut costs by closing facilities and eliminating some vacant correctional officer positions. However, a large number of vacancies still exist and are proving to be challenging to fill. Department officials reported that they have filled more than 300 of the vacancies by downsizing one large facility and closing others. But officials concede that hiring new officers to replace retiring veterans remains a challenge.\(^{21}\)

One of the policies implemented by the Hogan Administration to address this issue, is the use of financial incentives to recruit new correctional officers. The Administration is offering a $2,000 bonus to recruits who complete training at the academy and an extra $3,000 bonus to correctional officers who complete the one-year probationary period. The department also offers a $500 incentive to current correctional officers who recommend a successful CO candidate.\(^{22}\) One time bonus payouts have helped increase recruitment, but a large number of vacancies remain. Because of the paperwork requirement, lack of publicity about the initiative, ineffective publicity surrounding the bonuses, and low ultimate financial impact on the life of an individual

\(^{20}\) Michael Dresser, “Maryland tops states in decline of prison population, report shows,” Baltimore Sun (5/18/18).


\(^{22}\) Ibid.
correctional officer, this program is not likely to have a large enough effect on the recruitment and retention of officers to make a big enough dent in the vacancy issue. Maryland will need to offer more incentives and increase the desirability of the position to increase recruitment in the long-term.

One of the major obstacles to filling the many vacancies is the high bar that is set in the hiring process, specifically including polygraph tests. The Maryland General Assembly passed legislation in 2015, mandating the passage of a polygraph exam to be hired as a result of a massive corruption scandal in the Baltimore City Jail. This component in particular makes it extremely challenging to get hired because relatively few applicants pass. For example, in 2016, nearly half of all applicants to DPSCS failed the polygraph test and were subsequently not hired.

It has been recognized that barriers must be relaxed in order to fill vacant positions at a faster rate. For example, if applicants fail one part of the test, they only have to wait three months to try again, which has been reduced from the previous period of one year.

Just in the last few weeks, Governor Hogan announced that he will be submitting emergency legislation for the General Assembly’s consideration, when they come back into session in January, to address workforce shortages across the State of Maryland by establishing a tuition reimbursement program. Part of the program will be specifically targeted to correctional officers. The program can be used for the CO’s education or for one child of the CO if they choose not to use it themselves. If passed by the General Assembly, as is expected, this program will be very helpful in increasing recruitment and retention of correctional officers. This newly announced policy, will work perfectly in conjunction with our proposed solutions that build on

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24 Michael Dresser, “Maryland has severe shortage of correctional officers, union says,” Baltimore Sun (06/2016).
the policies that Gov. Hogan has already announced. The current efforts are definitely a step in
the correct direction, but more comprehensive solutions need to be implemented in order to make
a long-term impact on recruitment and retainment.

**Policy Alternatives**

**Policy Solution #1: Public Imaging Campaign**

For the first policy initiative, we recognize that corrections is currently not a very
desirable occupation, and we propose a public imaging campaign to address this negative
perception. This solution will provide insight into the meaningful work correctional officers
(COs) accomplish, which often goes unnoticed by the public and by the media. It has come to
our attention that careers in the police force and other public service areas are currently more
desirable than CO career opportunities. This is due in large part to misinformation and a missed
opportunity for the Department of Corrections to capitalize on it's life-changing mission and the
employment benefits it currently offers (which we explore expanding in later policy solutions).

The central recruitment message needs to focus on the career opportunities within
corrections and the purpose of COs. After speaking with Rachel Sessa, Legislative Director for
the Department of Corrections, her main suggestion for this stage of the initiative is to tell the
public and the media that COs are “bettering lives for release” and that the occupation is a
“career, not just a job” with the opportunity for a twenty-year retirement. Corrections offers a
unique retirement plan, the Correctional Officers Retirement System (CORS), that offers a
shorter retirement than other state departments and many other Maryland jobs with a higher
multiplier benefit than most state employees. By capitalizing on this retirement plan through
better advertising, Corrections can have a better recruitment impact in a target audience of 30+
year olds looking for job security. To better target younger populations, the message should be about working to improve the lives of inmates and setting incarcerated individuals up for success, both inside and outside of prison walls. By not only focusing on the aspect of public safety, this message will draw passionate individuals in the thirty and below target audience who are looking to start a career in public service.

**Policy Solution #2: Lowering Age Requirements for Part-time Correctional Officers**

The second solution addresses capturing a younger sector of employees in order to engage them in correctional employment opportunities. In order to increase recruitment, we recommend changing the state statute requiring the minimum hiring age to be twenty-one for COs. We recommend lowering the hiring age to eighteen only for part-time workers to relieve the need for overtime and staffing shortage. The age requirement for full-time employees can remain twenty-one. It is necessary to capture this age group as they graduate from high school and begin looking for employment. Eighteen is already the minimum age for military enlistment and for police academy cadet programming, and it should be the same for part-time COs. We understand that there exists an issue of maturity, which is why the current age requirement is twenty-one, but we have a proposed solution for this as well. In order to be hired between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one for part-time employment as a correctional officer, the individual applying must be enrolled in an associate’s or bachelor’s degree program and maintain a certain Grade Point Average (suggested 2.5). The newly announced tuition reimbursement plan for COs can apply to the aforementioned individuals working part-time in order to invest in their education and incentivize staying in the program. These individuals can be hired on a probationary basis if the Department of Corrections so wishes.
Policy solution #3: Increased Salaries

The third solution is a monetary investment from the State to raise the overall salary of COs in order to improve recruitment and retention for the department. Our suggestion is to take the $104.5 million that is currently spent on overtime and instead use that money to hire more employees. Increasing salaries will improve recruitment difficulties. Additionally, by not paying overtime, the State of Maryland will save money, which it can reinvest into covering this salary increase.

Policy Solution #4: Enhanced Mentorship

Research demonstrates that the most prominent stressors in a correctional environment are organizational and structural issues within the prison administration and weak or inconsistent leadership practices. In order to better integrate the relationship between correctional management and line staff, leadership should become more involved with providing training to the correctional officers on a monthly or bi-monthly basis in the areas of conflict resolution and mediation, stress management, and effective communication. Through closer interactions, upper level management would help improve morale and build a greater rapport between correctional officers and leadership. In doing so, they would strengthen the organizational commitment of their supervisees and increase retention rates.

Mentorship is an important responsibility of the agency and a strong aspect of proper and continuous training. Mentorship includes coaching and counseling employees on how to deal with frustration, giving constructive criticism, handling disappointment and behaving with

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26 Finn, Peter. Addressing Correctional Officer Stress: Programs and Strategies.
humility and compassion towards inmates and coworkers. By providing proper mentoring, the agency receives appropriate development of officers who can be part of and build upon a culture of effective correctional practices. The North Carolina Department of Corrections has successfully implemented a mentoring program since August 2000. The Correctional Officer Mentoring Program (COMP) is completed in three days and has been shown to retain Correctional Officers. Mentors say the program enables them to learn new skills and develops a stronger workforce, which ultimately aids every employee.

**Policy Solution #5: Removing Barriers for Hiring and Improving Anti-Corruption Protocol**

In 2015, the Maryland General Assembly enacted a bill which required all CO candidates to undergo a polygraph examination as a part of the hiring process. The bill was drafted in response to the scandal at the Baltimore City Detention Center, which resulted in the convictions of over twenty correctional officers. Other corruption cases at the Eastern Correctional Institution and the Jessup Correctional Facility in recent years have significantly prompted efforts to prevent the hiring of prison-guard personnel with gang affiliations, with particular reliance on the now required polygraph examination.

Research from a report released by the American Psychological Association maintains that there is little basis for validity of polygraph examinations. The United States Supreme Court has continually rejected the use of the polygraph examinations as evidence in courtrooms citing “the aura of infallibility of such evidence”. Rather than enhancing security, the mandatory

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29 Ibid.

30 Bennett L. Gershman, Lie Detection: The Supreme Court's Polygraph Decision, N.Y. St. B.J
polygraph examinations in Maryland are hindering a potential influx of new hires in correctional services, proving to actually be detrimental to the security of detention centers and prisons in Maryland. Further, the polygraph exam is weeding out potential hires more so than it is preventing corruption from occurring. During 2016, out of 303 requests to the DPSCS Polygraph Unit for Correctional Officer applicants, only 160 individuals were eventually cleared.

Some of the challenges with polygraph examinations include: a tense or strained interaction between the examiner and the subject can affect the outcome, the examiner must rely on subjective interpretations of the measurements, some guilty individuals have successfully deceived the examiner by controlling their emotions with countermeasures such as biting the cheek or stepping on a tack inserted into the shoe, innocent people that react poorly to questioning have been labeled deceptive, a polygraph test typically takes two to three hours and requires a skilled, certified examiner.\textsuperscript{31} If a person tires easily or is anxious, this amount of time may be excessive. Also, the test is somewhat invasive—sensors are attached to the fingers and chest—and some individuals feel anxious as a result. Finally, polygraph examinations are expensive to conduct.

Rather than subjecting individuals to methodologically unsound polygraph examinations during the pre-hiring phase, more comprehensive anti-corruption protocol can be implemented. Procedures could more heavily rely on home visits, checks of personal background, including whether there are any potentially problematic family ties, drug and alcohol tests, monitoring of personal lifestyles (personal finances checking), random or targeted inspection of employee’s workplaces and vehicles, and integrity testing which has historically been used in the law

enforcement field. These procedures can occur prior to hiring a candidate, and serve two functions. First these processes are empirically sound methods of deterring dishonesty and corruption, and second, they can provide a more holistic view of potential candidates. COs should be subject to bi-annual criminal and credit checks to look for unusual spikes in income activity, as well as a validated risk-assessment of criminogenic risk, throughout the course of their employment after being hired. These protocols would be disclosed to potential hires prior to their being hired. This allows for a more definitive way of monitoring correctional officers through the use of anti-corruption protocols, without weeding out potentially sound employees during the hiring process. The disparity in earning potential between smuggling and an honest and legitimate correctional officer salary can make corruption seem like an appealing option, so addressing low wages can also contribute to the solution for corruption among correctional personnel.

We recommend that this policy proposal be reconsidered following the release of additional DPSCS reports on the effectiveness of polygraph examinations in detecting candidates at a high risk for corruption and the amount of false positives that disqualify potentially sound employees.

Analysis and Recommendation

As a group, we determined it was most important that the policies put in place be effective in solving the problem and present a common sense solution that would address short and long-term benefits for both the department itself as well as the current and future employees of the department. The categories we use to analyze our solutions include short-term cost, long-term cost, increased retention impact, and increased recruitment impact. Short-term cost is
defined as the fiscal investment for the first year of policy implementation, long-term cost is defined as continual cost accumulation after one year, increased retention impact refers to the policy’s ability to keep employees in the department, and increased recruitment impact refers to the policy’s ability to improve hiring rates for Corrections positions.

Policy solution one, the public imaging campaign, involves a high short-term cost for initial investment into advertising and media coverage. The long-term cost is stable and will decrease as recruitment increases over time. Retention impact is low compared to other solutions, because this policy is more focused on recruitment strategy. Recruitment impact is high, because the advertising campaign will draw more potential workers to the department.

Policy solution two, lowering age requirements for part-time workers does not involve any short or long-term costs. The policy mostly focuses on the recruitment impact which will be high for younger individuals. Retention impact is moderate because part-time officers will absorb overtime which is a major cause for officer resignations. Introducing them to the Corrections field is important, and coupling that with the tuition reimbursement already in place will allow more individuals of college age to take advantage of this opportunity.

Policy solution three, increased salaries, involves financial investment. Both the short-term cost and long-term cost will be high for across the board salary increases. However, as more correctional officers are recruited and choose to stay in the position, the amount of money spent on overtime will steadily decrease. Retention impact is significantly high, because individuals will be more likely to both want and be financially able to stay in Corrections positions if more competitive wages are offered. Recruitment impact is also especially high, because with higher,

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more competitive wages, the DOC will be a more desirable employer and provide compensation that is more indicative of higher prestige careers.

Policy solution four, enhanced mentorship, involves a moderate short term cost, as there needs to be training on topics such as ethics, communication, leadership, and motivation. Training would need to take place over several days for senior officers chosen to serve as mentors. Once training is completed, senior officers can receive a certificate of completion of the mentorship program, and after this certificate is given, short term costs for that individual shifts to a very little amount. Depending on the implementation scheme of the mentorship program, long term costs can fall anywhere between negligible and moderate. If following the model of North Carolina Department of Corrections Correctional Officer Mentorship Program (COMP), senior officers who have completed their mentorship training and have stepped into the role of a mentor would be awarded an additional $100 per month. Another option is to rely on professional opportunity and development rather than monetary strategies of incentivization, such as allowing senior officers who are mentors to be considered higher priority for promotions and pay raises.

The mentorship program impact on retention is quite high. While acting as mentors, officers will see more opportunity for career advancement and developing valuable professional skills. Simultaneously, new officers on the force will receive support from their peers, and will feel better prepared to enter their career in correctional services. Recruitment impact is low to moderate, as the mentorship program will be marketed to potential candidates, but is really meant for individuals who have actually been hired.
The final policy solution, Removing Barriers for Hiring and Improving Anti-Corruption Protocol, involves a null effect on short term cost as the expensive polygraph examination will be replaced with a number of other methods of checking the integrity of candidates. The long term cost will ideally be low, as there is a decreased chance of false positives derived from the polygraph examination which unnecessarily rule out candidates, resulting in more personnel and less overtime pay. Retention is not impacted by this policy solution, but recruitment will be highly impacted. Although the hiring process will involve an increase in processes for anti-corruption and integrity checks, the processes are more empirically sound and decrease the chances of candidates being ruled out because of the appearance of deception on their polygraph exam.

**Recommendation:**

Of the five policy solutions, we recommend implementing solutions one, two, and three as a package. Each of these solutions builds on the other and is part of a financial strategy to save the State of Maryland money and repurpose funds into long-lasting solutions. In order for policy solution one (public imaging campaign) to be effective, solution two (lowering the age requirement for part-time workers) will also need to be in place, as it enhances recruitment of younger employees. Solution two will alleviate overtime wages without costing the state, and that money can instead be redirected into solution three (increasing salaries). Increased salaries along with better public imaging and advertisement will increase CO recruitment and retention, and over time, the state will save money by no longer having to pay expensive overtime wages.
Implementation Issues

There are several issues for logistical implementation of our policy recommendations. Firstly, efforts to boost morale or change public perception are not guaranteed to work. Secondly, despite gradual reductions as the recruitment and retention plans take effect, some funds will likely still be spent on overtime. There will likely need to be limitations on tuition reimbursement so that they do not run out. Thirdly, there is the question of whether employees will be able to take time out of their schedules to complete mentor programs and additional training. Until there are enough employees, it would be challenging to find the time given the current issues with understaffing. Outside of scheduled work hours, it is likely that employees would not want to spend additional time at their workplace. Another concern is that the polygraph bill would have to be repealed, which may open up a public debate and possibly criticism. There is also the point that discovering corrupt correctional officers only after they have been hired is not ideal. It could raise turnover rates and allow for more illegal activity than if they are never hired in the first place. Finally, while cutting overtime will allow money to be shifted to paying higher salaries, the Governor will need to provide and the General Assembly would need to approve a higher amount of funding for DPSCS, Division of Corrections.

Conclusion

Addressing workforce shortages in correctional facilities is critical to ensuring safety for inmate populations and for COs. Improving recruitment and retention will greatly benefit the CO community and ensure a productive and positive work environment for these public servants. Maryland is leading the nation in so many areas. We can continue to change Maryland for the better by capitalizing on the great work COs already do through a public imaging campaign. The
state can also help alleviate mandatory overtime, which is expensive and harmful to the health and procurement of COs, by relooking at lowering age requirements for a cadet program and by initiating a part-time program for all age categories. Lastly, by saving funds through the two previous solutions, the state has the opportunity to invest in raising salaries. These solutions will allow the state to fill CO vacancies and address the issues that vacant positions create, strengthening Maryland’s criminal justice system.
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