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**NEWS ADVISORY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Justice Reinvestment Task Force Kicks Off  
Review of State Criminal Justice System**

At its first meeting today, the recently created Missouri State Justice Reinvestment Task Force began to explore a number of issues facing the state’s criminal justice system, including an uptick in violent crime, the nation’s fastest growing female prison population, and a growing number of people failing on probation and parole.

Detailed analyses on these issues were presented by The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, a nonprofit organization that provides practical, nonpartisan, research-driven strategies and tools to increase public safety and strengthen communities. The CSG Justice Center is working with Missouri as it participates in the federal Justice Reinvestment Initiative, an approach aimed at helping states contain corrections spending and reinvest in strategies that can reduce recidivism and increase public safety.

During the meeting, task force members and CSG Justice Center staff reviewed data highlighting the state’s growing prison population, changing trends in the probation and parole populations and increased violent crime rate. Missouri’s prison population increased 6 percent between 2010 and 2015, from 30,614 to 32,328 people, and nearly half of all prison admissions were due to people being revoked from parole and probation. During the same period, the total U.S. prison population declined 5 percent.

“If somebody gets out of prison, we want them to go to work. We want them to pay their fair share of taxes. We want them to take care of their kids. We want them to set a good example. And the last thing we want is somebody coming out of prison and committing a crime which hurts another family and starts that same bad cycle all over again,” Missouri

Governor Eric Greitens said. "We didn't come to Jefferson City to do the easy stuff. We came here to make Missouri safer and save people money. That's what we're doing."

Last month, Governor Greitens, then Chief Justice Patricia Breckenridge, Senate President Pro Tempore Ron Richard, and House Speaker Todd Richardson formally requested support from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) to use a justice reinvestment approach to address challenges in the state's criminal justice system. The CSG Justice Center will provide intensive technical assistance throughout this process by collecting and analyzing data and assisting the task force in developing appropriate policy options to help increase public safety and contain the cost of corrections.

"This task force will spend the next six months pouring over the data and hearing from criminal justice leaders and people on the front lines of the criminal justice system throughout the state in an effort to replace inefficient or failing practices with policies that have been proven to work," Missouri Department of Corrections Director and task force chair Anne Precythe said. "The leaders around the table today have committed to building a safer, more effective and sustainable criminal justice system here in Missouri."

During the meeting, the task force reviewed a number of different criminal justice data trends compiled by CSG Justice Center staff. Among the topics discussed was the fact that the state has the fastest-growing female prison population in the country. Between 2010 and 2015, Missouri's female prison population grew 33 percent, and over the next three years, it is projected to increase another 15 percent. The male prison population is projected to increase only 2 percent during the same period. The majority of women in state prison in Missouri are admitted for nonviolent offenses.

Overall, Missouri has the nation's eighth-highest incarceration rate.

"Despite having one of the highest incarceration rates in the nation, our violent crime rate continues to increase," said Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia. "It is obvious that we cannot solve this problem simply by building new jails and prisons. I'm confident this task force will deliver policy proposals that if enacted will improve our community-based corrections, treatment and rehabilitation options and provide realistic pathways for people to leave incarceration for good."

Under the direction of the task force, CSG Justice Center staff will conduct a comprehensive analysis of crime, arrest, conviction, sentencing, probation, incarceration, behavioral health, parole, and recidivism data, using hundreds of thousands of individual data records. CSG Justice Center staff will examine probation, parole, and incarcerated population trends; length of time served in incarceration and on supervision; statutory and

administrative policies; and availability and effectiveness of community-based treatment and programs designed to reduce recidivism.

“This is a unique opportunity to bring local and state leaders, members of the community and those who have lived experiences in our criminal justice system together at the same table,” said Cole County Sheriff John Wheeler, who is representing the Missouri Sheriff’s Association on the task force. “Through this collaborative effort, we will tackle the problems we’re facing and develop solutions that make for a stronger and safer Missouri.”

CSG Justice Center staff will travel throughout the state to collect input from criminal justice system stakeholders, including, judges, prosecuting attorneys, public defenders, sheriffs, police chiefs, probation and parole officers, behavioral health treatment providers, victims and their advocates, people in the criminal justice system and their advocates, residents and leaders in communities and neighborhoods where confidence in the criminal justice system may be low, and local officials.

The task force will present a series of policy proposals to the state legislature before its 2018 session.

“We are going to use the justice reinvestment approach to enhance a criminal justice system that is effective, cost efficient and delivers results the citizens of Missouri can be proud of,” Precythe said.

More than 25 states have successfully used the justice reinvestment approach to date, including Arkansas, Texas and West Virginia.

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