



Budget Office

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

May 4, 2023

The Honorable Darrell Clarke
City Council President
City Hall, Room 490
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Council President Clarke,

This letter is in response to questions raised by Councilmember Brooks regarding the Proposed FY24 Operating and Capital Budget.

Prison Monitor

1. **Question:** The federal monitor found that the prison department is not meeting most of its commitments for basic requirements like out-of-cell time, prompt access to care, and access to the law library.

Response: Respectfully, we suggest that the federal monitor has found the PDP partially compliant with those referenced positions rather than non-compliant, as suggested by the framing of the statement. The transition to the 12-hour shift in CFCF as a result of the interim arbitration award has facilitated our efforts to move toward full compliance (as there is not a disruptive shift change in the middle of the day), and we expect the graduated adoption of that shift model in the other facilities will also help us increase compliance with those provisions. However, our ability to achieve full compliance with those provisions is impacted by our ongoing vacancy rate, which we are continuously working to reduce in partnership with the Human Resources department.

2. **Question:** What is the plan for ensuring that people in custody have access to these basics?

Response: As described in the response to Question 1, we expect the combination of adopting the 12-hour shift across the facilities, and the ongoing efforts to hire correctional staff, will allow PDP to achieve full compliance with those provisions of the agreement. We note that people do have access to out of cell time, care, and the law library, but the shift change and additional staffing will assure increased access to all of them. To further hiring, Prisons will continue to partner with Central Office of Human Resources to attract and hire staff. PDP is also developing a peer mentor program to support newly hired staff to improve retention. Additional staff allows for increased coverage throughout our facilities which allows staff to be assigned to posts which allow for programs and activities for our incarcerated population.

3. **Question:** When will the prison meet its commitments in these fields?

Response: PDP cannot specifically identify when it will have sufficient staffing to achieve full compliance with those provisions, as Prisons is facing the same hiring difficulties as carceral institutions



Budget Office

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

across the country. Prisons will, however, continue its efforts to increase compliance with the existing staffing levels, and expects the introduction of the 12-hour shift across the campus will assist these efforts.

Sec. Wetzel

4. **Question:** How much did the Department spend to contract with former Secretary Wetzel?

Response: \$329K

5. **Question:** Is the City still under contract with Secretary Wetzel?

Response: Yes. A contract extension is being reviewed for consideration.

6. **Question:** Will the Department commit to sharing the findings and outcomes of Secretary Wetzel's work with City Council and the public this month?

Response: Mr. Wetzel's report is not yet completed. Prisons is committed to sharing the report once it has been completed.

Prison Labor

7. **Question:** What are the hourly wages that people are paid for their labor while incarcerated in Philadelphia?

Response: PDP increased incarcerated pay by \$.50 from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per day. This wage increase did not effect incarcerated workers who are paid on an hourly basis.

8. **Question:** If there are a range of rates, please specify how many individuals are paid which rates.

Response: **Incarcerated workers assigned to** Correctional Industries are paid hourly pay receiving \$0.25 to \$0.65 per hour. The daily wage increase does not apply to these incarcerated workers. Incarcerated people can increase their hourly wage by demonstrating skillsets via tests after the first six weeks of the curriculum.

9. **Question:** What do you do with the products made by incarcerated Philadelphians?

Response: Correctional Industries products are made for City and non-profit agencies to purchase goods.

10. **Question:** Does our city government purchase these items?

Response: Yes.

11. **Question:** Are they sold for profit?



Budget Office

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Response: Yes. All revenue is reappropriated to the PDP's Philacor Index Fund.

12. **Question:** In the budget detail, products purchased by the Prison department that are made by Phila Cor include uniforms for correctional officers, janitorial supplies, office supplies, dry goods, printing supplies, electrical supplies, hardware, and tools. Are these products made by incarcerated Philadelphians?

Response: No. The aforementioned items are purchased from contracted vendors and goods are not made by incarcerated population.

13. **Question:** The goal in the five-year plan is to have 70% of incarcerated Philadelphians do this labor, correct?

Response: Prisons performance goal is for 70% of the population to participate in an institutional work assignment or program. Institutional work assignments are provided to develop or strengthen work skills for post release employment.

Prison Conditions

14. **Question:** Will outdoor recreation be made available to all people in PDP custody on a daily basis throughout the year?

Response: Weather permitting and with proper security coverage to ensure the safety of the population.

15. **Question:** If not, how often do you believe that incarcerated Philadelphians should be permitted to go outside?

Response: Weather permitting and on a daily basis with appropriate security coverage.

16. **Question:** What percentage of incarcerated Philadelphians experience this level of outside time?

Response: We do not track recreation time by percentages and are unable to provide a percentage of the population. However, CFCF, RCF, and PICC all have individual recreation yards attached to each housing area. Individuals are permitted to go outside during out-of-cell time. Individuals at the Detention Center require a security escort for direct security observation and weather permitting to go outside.

17. **Question:** The PA Prison Society has reported that in some facilities breakfast, lunch, and dinner were each served only two to three hours apart, with no food served for 15 hours between 4:00 pm and 7:00 am. Do you think this is acceptable?

Response: If true, this is unacceptable. We have repeatedly requested the PA Prison Society to provide information in real-time which will allow Prisons to investigate the allegation, and, if warranted, take appropriate corrective action.

18. **Question:** What is being done to rectify this?

Response: We monitor mealtime distribution to ensure meals are served to the population as scheduled.



Budget Office

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

19. **Question:** Tablets are vital ways for people in custody to read, find entertainment, and make video calls. At other facilities, like the Allegheny County Jail and the Delaware County Jail there is a 1-1 ratio of tablets to people in general housing but in Philadelphia, there are not enough tablets for every person in custody, and those that we do have are often broken. How much does the Department spend on these insufficient and frequently broken tablets?

Response: Broken tablets are promptly replaced by the contracted vendor at a cost of \$250 per tablet.

20. **Question:** What are the Department's plans to increase the availability of tablets.

Response: Prisons completed its infrastructure evaluation to expand the internet capability necessary to provide tablets for each incarcerated individual. Additional wiring is necessary before purchasing tablets for the entire population. Prisons are in the fifth year, with one year extension with its contracted phone vendor, and expects to issue an RFP in summer FY24 slated for an award by Spring FY24.

Deaths

21. **Question:** How many people incarcerated died across 2022?

Response: Ten (10)

22. **Question:** Were the **final results** of the investigations about these deaths shared with the Board?

Response: No. We cannot provide information during an active investigation so that we do not interfere with investigations leading to criminal prosecution and cannot provide information before two years to not interfere with the two year statute of limitations for civil lawsuits.

23. **Question:** At least a dozen people died in the last 2 years connected to drug overdose or withdrawal. What is the department's plan to address this issue?

Response: Prisons continue its medication opioid use disorder (MOUD) program by accessing individuals for MOUD and providing suboxone for individuals admitted and withdrawing from substances. However, MOUD treatment has no effect on individuals who have used Xylazine or the street name "tranq." Individuals that cannot be treated onsite are transported to local hospitals for escalated medical intervention. Prisons continues to conduct searches for contraband brought inside the jail to divert it from getting into the hands of the population.

Staffing

24. **Question:** We have heard about the staffing crisis on State Road for two years. What is the Prison department doing now to analyze and reconfigure staff assignments to address the myriad deprivations, dysfunctions, and violence inside of the prisons?

Response: Mr. Wetzel continues to conduct a staffing analysis of our posts and staff complement. Prisons were awarded the ability to implement the 12-hour schedule which supports work-life balance.



Budget Office

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

25. **Question:** In 2022 the Department had more than 600 unfilled positions. Approximately 1/3 of its total staffing complement. What is the Department doing to retain staff? And what is the Department doing to recruit staff?

Response: Prisons is developing additional training focused on wellness, mindfulness, and mentoring to support and retain staff. The preliminary implementation of sign-on and Academy completion bonuses has resulted in a decrease in attrition for new cadets. The preliminary findings of the financial incentives for the 12-Hour schedule pilot have proven to be positive, with a decrease in attrition, improved attendance, and retention. We anticipate the expansion of the 12-Hour Schedule coupled with the wage increase and financial incentives will attract more applicants applying for the positions, ultimately graduating multiple academies to fill vacancies. Further, we expect offering hybrid 8- and 12-Hours schedules to align with the Department's goal of creating work-life balance.

PDP offers a \$1,000 hiring bonus of which \$500 is paid upon graduation from the Academy and \$500 is paid upon completion of one (1) year with Prisons. Existing employees receive two (2) \$1,300 retention bonuses for equity with new hires. All eligible employees who meet attendance requirements, receive a \$500 quarterly incentive.

The wage increase for the 12-Hour schedule was awarded on January 27, 2023, as part of the Interim Arbitration Award. PDP's 12-Hour schedule starting wage exceeds starting wages for PA Department of Corrections, Correctional Officer 1 (\$42,667), Camden County (\$46,279), and Delaware (\$45,790) for correctional officer positions.

Prison Advisory Board

26. **Question:** How many times has the Prison Advisory Board met in 2022?

Response: There were (5) Prison Advisory Board meetings in 2022.

27. **Question:** How many of these meetings did members of the public attend?

Response: None

28. **Question:** Were these meetings publicized as open to the public?

Response: No.

29. **Question:** If not, why not?

Response: PDP did not facilitate public meetings during the pandemic, has resumed as of our last meeting that occurred on April 27, 2023. . PDP will continue to ensure notification for future meetings.



Budget Office

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

30. **Question:** Did the Prison Advisory Board hold any independent public hearings or make any recommendations to Prison Administration?

Response: Yes. The Prison Advisory Board testified before City Council and had private meetings with City Council members.

31. **Question:** Did it issue any written reports?

Response: Yes. One statement report was issued to City Council and City Administration.

32. **Question:** Have the spots that opened up due to resignations on the Board been filled?

Response: No. The filling of these spots continues to be at the discretion of mayor.