Georgia

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Between 1990 and 2011, Georgia’s prison population more than doubled and was projected to grow 8 percent more by 2016 at a cost of $264 million. With technical assistance through JRI, the state enacted HB 1176 in 2012 to address prison growth, improve public safety, and reduce costs. Still facing the highest probation rate in the country five years later, Georgia reengaged in JRI and passed targeted reforms through SB 174 in 2017.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Through HB 1176 and SB 174, Georgia:

Invested in Strategies to Reduce Recidivism and Expand Treatment Resources
- Reinvested more than $232 million in accountability courts, Residential Substance Abuse Treatment programs, and strategies to improve outcomes for people leaving prison
- Expanded accountability courts (e.g. drug, mental health, and veterans’ courts) to every judicial circuit

Adjusted the Criminal Code to Align Penalties with the Severity of Each Offense
- Adjusted sentences for burglary, forgery, theft, and drug possession based on the seriousness of the offense, decreasing sentence lengths for many less serious offenses and raising them for a few of the most serious ones
- Nearly eliminated the jail backlog (people awaiting transfer to prison)

Strengthened and Streamlined Probation and Parole Supervision
- Focused intensive supervision on those at high risk of reoffending, established a range of sanction options, and streamlined the process for moving people to unsupervised probation and early termination
- Decreased average probation caseload size nearly 25 percent between 2017 and 2018
- Between 2007 and 2016, saw a 35 percent decline in parole revocations and a 17 percent decline in probation revocations to prison
- Required judges to waive fines and fees for people on probation who are unable to pay them

SAVINGS/REINVESTMENT

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<th>Savings/averted costs</th>
<th>State JRI investment</th>
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<td>$264,000,000</td>
<td>$232,922,006</td>
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Recognizing their promise as an effective alternative to prison, particularly for people with substance use disorders and mental illness, Georgia has built a statewide system of accountability courts in part through JRI. The state now operates at least one in every judicial district and participation has increased from about 3,100 clients in FY 2013 to more than 9,700 in FY 2017. Through subsequent legislation, the state created a statewide Council of Accountability Court Judges to set and hold courts accountable to best practices and develop a data repository to support continuous quality improvements. The Georgia Council on Criminal Justice Reform estimates that managing cases through alternative courts has averted $212 million in incarceration costs.
In 2017, there were approximately 5,000 fewer people in Georgia prisons than projected before reform.

Georgia is focusing prison space on people convicted of serious offenses. In 2018, 67 percent of people in prison were there for a violent offense, up from 58 percent in 2008.

Recidivism rates have remained steady for people released from prison and on probation.

Violent crime was steady before JRI and remained relatively stable after reform.

Property crime was declining before JRI and continued to decline after reform.

The data in this summary describe trends and provide additional context on system changes pre- and post-reform. Indicators shown here track high-level changes in state justice systems and do not necessarily demonstrate the impact of any specific reform, including JRI policy and practice changes. Visit urbn.is/JRI to see detailed sources for information in this fact sheet.