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Governor and General Assembly Recognize Need to Improve the Effectiveness of Reintegration of Youth Offenders

SPRINGFIELD, IL – Gov. Pat Quinn has approved with changes legislation aimed at reducing recidivism by young offenders and improving the safety of their home communities.

Senate Bill 1725 directs the Juvenile Justice Commission to study juvenile offenders released from state custody but later returned for parole violations, and to recommend steps the state could take to help young offenders successfully complete the terms of their parole. On Tuesday, Governor Quinn issued an amendatory veto requiring the Commission issue the report in September 2010, instead of the 2009 date in the bill. If the General Assembly approves the change in the fall veto session, the bill will become law with the Governor's modification.

According to the latest published reports from the Department of Juvenile Justice, 42 percent of the juvenile admissions in Fiscal Year 2005 were for technical parole violations.

“An enormous proportion of the youth locked up in our system are there for technical parole violations,” stated Betsy Clarke, President of the Juvenile Justice Initiative. “Once we have data that tells us about these youth and why they are being returned to state prisons, we can design more effective services to help youth be successful members of their communities. It is much less expensive to keep youth from returning than paying over \$70,000 per year to house a youth in confinement,” said Clarke.

Policy makers have been frustrated by the absence of adequate information regarding the success of reentry by juvenile offenders in Illinois, and the legislation will require the collection of a variety of data, including the number of youth confined in the Department of Juvenile Justice for parole revocation based on a technical parole violation, the length of time the youth spent on parole prior to revocation, and demographics concerning the youth. This data will provide the basis for recommendations from the state Juvenile Justice Commission and become part of its state annual report.

“We know too many youth are failing to reintegrate back into productive citizenship. It is difficult to know what changes need to be made to help them when the data is not reported on why youth are returned to incarceration,” stated Clarke.

Sponsors of the legislation include: Senator Kwame Raoul (D-Chicago) and Representatives Art Turner (D-Chicago), Dennis Reboletti (R-Addison), Annazette Collins (D-Chicago), Patti Bellock (R-Westmont), Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago), and Elaine Nekritz (D-Des Plaines).

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