

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Criminal Justice Estimating Conference

#### March 17, 2021

The Criminal Justice Estimating Conference convened March 17, 2021, to revise the forecast of prison admissions and population. During the four months monitored since the November 2020 Conference, admissions totaled 5,821 which was 2,217 below the estimate. The prison population at the end of February 2021 was 79,425 which was 2,740 below the November estimate. These large errors in the forecast directly result from the continuing impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on the criminal justice system and the state's response, which began in March of 2020.

As a result of the continuing pandemic, the courts have developed a backlog of pending felony cases (27,364) that is expected to take several years to work its way through to the prison population. At this time, they do not expect to return to full operating capacity until FY 2021-22, with their backlog expected to take until the end of FY 2023-24 to resolve itself. In addition, the Department of Corrections has a current backlog of 2,066 sentenced offenders waiting in the jails that should begin to clear once they return to full intake in June. Nevertheless, the Sheriffs are tightly managing jail capacity as the backlog continues to build. For all of these reasons and other pandemic-related issues, an unknown number of future inmates will earn atypically low jail credits prior to sentencing and transfer to the state system. As conditions return to normal, the clearance of the backlog coupled with the reduced amount of accrued jail credits is expected to exert upward pressure on prison admissions and the resulting population, but not relative to the prior Conference expectations regarding these issues in November.

Considering the current reopening plans for the court system, the conferees adopted a population forecast which assumes a -14.5 percent decrease in total admissions in FY 2020-21 relative to the -9.8 percent decline assumed in November. After reopening, admissions are expected to increase 64.5 percent in FY 2021-22. Total admissions then decline for 3 years (by -3.6 percent in FY 2022-23, by -1.4 percent in FY 2023-24, and by -1.3 percent in FY 2024-25) before increasing in FY 2025-26 by 0.3 percent.

The June 30 projected prison population is now expected to decrease by -7.9 percent in FY 2020-21 rather than the -6.4 percent assumed in November. Population is then expected to increase each year through the remainder of the forecast period: by 7.8 percent in FY 2021-22; by 3.0 percent in FY 2022-23; by 1.6 percent in FY 2023-24; by 1.1 percent in FY 2024-25; and by 0.8 percent in FY 2025-26.

Year	Admissions	Releases	End of year pop	End of year over (under) July 2020 CJEC	End of year percent change
FY 20-21	18,511	25,480	80,767	-1,349	-7.9%
FY 21-22	30,449	24,166	87,050	587	7.8%
FY 22-23	29,348	26,725	89,673	-58	3.0%
FY 23-24	28,931	27,467	91,137	-479	1.6%
FY 24-25	28,558	27,565	92,130	-209	1.1%
FY 25-26	28,633	27,909	92,854	-57	0.8%