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Moderator: Dennis Stoika

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Operator: Good day and welcome to the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice conference call. Today's conference is being recorded. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Director Phil Keith. Please go ahead sir.

Phil Keith: Good afternoon and thank you for joining us today. I called the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice to order. On behalf of General Barr, we thank you for joining us today for this important commission teleconference meeting. I -- like Paul -- hope you had a very beneficial and restful weekend as we come back together this week for our series of teleconferences. As was mentioned last week, we're on track to continue this schedule with conference calls with two to three calls per week through at least May the 18th. We are exploring an in-person meeting in June if the situation with COVID-19 continues to improve.

We've heard from many of you about having a traditional) face-to-face commission hearing and we will continue to work toward that end as our country makes progress towards the COVID-19 virus. We're also meeting and exceeding our milestones on the timeline and feel very confident that even though we've had to accommodate significant changes to the format and our platform of the commission's work, we have not lost time toward meeting our goals or making progress toward a final report. And with that at this time, I'd ask our Executive Director -- Dean Kueter -- to conduct our roll call of commissioners.

Dean Kueter: Thank you Mr. Chairman and before I call the roll, I'd like to remind everyone that today's

hearing is open to the press. And for any members of the media on the call, if you have any questions or any references to anything, please contact Kristina or Mastropasqua in the Justice Department Office of Public Affairs. And with that, I'll begin the roll.

Commissioner Bowdich. Commissioner Clemmons.

James Clemmons: Present.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Evans.

D. Christopher Evans: Here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Frazier. Commissioner Gualtieri.

Robert Gualtieri: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Hawkins. Commissioner Lombardo.

Regina Lombardo: Here thank you.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner MacDonald.

Erica MacDonald: Good afternoon - present.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Moody.

Ashley Moody: Here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Parr.

Nancy Parr: I'm present.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Price.

Craig Price: Good afternoon - I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Ramsay.

Gordon Ramsay: Here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Rausch.

David Rausch: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Samaniego.

John Samaniego: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Commissioner Smallwood.

James Smallwood: I'm here.

Dean Kueter: Vice-Chair Sullivan.

Katie Sullivan: Here.

Dean Kueter: And Commissioner Washington.

Donald Washington: Here.

Dean Kueter: Mr. Chairman, that concludes the roll call.

Phil Keith: Thank you - any other announcements today Dean?

Dean Kueter: No sir, we are good to go.

Phil Keith: Thank you - today and tomorrow the commissioners will complete the testimony on the topic of reentry. And then we'll shift our focus on Thursday to a panel on grant funding and processes. All commissioners should have the bios and testimonies from this panel. And as a reminder, we'll be posting all these materials on the Law Enforcement Commission Website. Once again, we all know the commissioners and working group members are making substantial sacrifices in meeting the demands of this commission's work and we continue to acknowledge everyone's commitment, efforts, and contributions to meet the goals of this historic commission. On behalf of the Attorney General Barr, we thank each of you.

As noted in previous calls, we encourage commissioners to take notes during the testimony of the panels, and then when we complete the questions -- excuse me -- when we complete the testimony, we'll have questions for our witnesses.

Our first distinguished panelist is BJay Pak who is the United States Attorney for the Northern

District of Georgia. US Attorney Pak has had a tremendous amount of success employing the Projects Safe Neighborhoods model in his district. We look forward to hearing more from him. Thank you for joining us Mr. Pak. You're recognized.

BJay Pak: Thank you Chairman Keith, Madam Vice-Chair Sullivan, and members of the Commission. Let me first off - thank you for providing me an opportunity to provide testimony regarding our office's Reentry Program which is part of our Project Safe Neighborhoods strategy. As you have noted, my name is BJay Pak and I am the US Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia. And in this role, I have the distinct pleasure and honor to serve a federal district that encompasses 46 counties north of Georgia, with more than 6.4 million people, which includes our everyday heroes who work at more than 200 law enforcement agencies located in our district.

In this role -- and interestingly my previous role as a policymaker -- I had an opportunity to work on issues that impact law enforcement. And in general -- criminal justice and criminal justice reform measures -- and I've done that for several years. One of the most important aspects of criminal justice reform, which is to have a result where we reduce crime and also to produce productive citizens, the focus has been on re-entry. That is, looking at ways to assist those that were incarcerated and reentering society and how they could turn out to be productive citizens and to lower recidivism. If done correctly, these efforts will lead to obvious benefits such as decreasing recidivism, but in overall in making our community safer.

And in conceptualizing our reentry program, I first focused -- I noted the report and to 2018 update on prisoner recidivism -- that the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported. And that report noted that 68% of prisoners nationally are rearrested within three years. So in conceptualizing our program, we try to beat this number - meaning lower this number of recidivism. And of course, the characteristics of the offenders varied across the country in time in numerous factors.

Applied Research Services -- which is our PSN research partner -- they computed and looked at kind of the data for the state of Georgia for the year 2016, and found the same proportional rearrests. Along with multiple arrests before incarcerations, 70% of those who were rearrested in Georgia were arrested more than once after their release. And it also showed that males, younger individuals, people of color, and those who are undereducated have a hard reintegrating compared to those who were similarly situated.

I then instructed my staff to research databasing - reentry programs - that targeted this demographic, because these were the demographic that are the highest risk of reoffending. Now through thorough research -- and based on kind of our successful experience with Credible Messenger in the context of prevention -- we looked at adopting a program that deployed Credible Messengers to those offenders who were about to reenter society coming from institutions.

A brief description of the Credible Messenger, it basically matches young people who have high risk of criminally offending with Credible Messengers, that is people who are trained and would have experiences that young people with high risk go through, to serve as mentors. They're typically people who previously served substantial sentences in state or federal prison that dedicated themselves to reducing recidivism. And unlike other mentoring initiatives, Credible Messengers are "wounded healer" so that they're uniquely qualified to connect with individuals that we are targeting.

And although there is some limited research to date, there are several impactful studies that show very promising outcomes. For example, the Credible Messengers Program, the Arches Transformative Mentoring Program in New York showed a 69% lower felony arrest rate after 12

months of participation and 57% lower felony arrest rate after 24 months.

A 2017 study by the Urban Institute showed that this Credible Messenger approach yields an increased engagement with programs, increased compliance, improved relationships between stakeholders, and reduction and rearrest in violations and gun violence and any types of anti-social behavior. So this gave us some confidence to employ this in the reentry context.

So the actual program was that as follows. We launched the program. We first funded some training for our Credible Messenger partners that we work with, that we trusted and vetted, along with our community outreach specialists. And then we retained our independent research partner to help structure our Credible Messenger Program in terms of targeting and tracking.

And so, basically in 2018 in July, our adult reentry initiative began in the Metro Reentry Facility here in Atlanta with the Georgia Department of Corrections with young men serving the last 12 to 18 months of incarceration for violent crimes or gun-related offenses or gang-affiliated criminal offense. Now these - the demographics of these participants are -- the majority were males, black -- at the highest and greatest risk of recidivism. The combined age was 30. 21% of their previous 669 combined arrests were for violent crimes. Only 6% were married. More than half had children. A quarter had graduated high school and only half could read at an eighth-grade level. And of course, 35% were employed by the time they were arrested and incarcerated. 51% were validated members of violent gangs including Crips, Bloods, Gangster Disciples, Ghostface and Goodfellas.

Now when we surveyed these individuals, they identified the most pressing need that they had - 93% identified employment being the number one barrier, 83% identified the need for healthcare, 80% identified the need for support network, 70% identified need for transportation, obtaining

identification, and also for housing. 91% of the participants recognized that they needed a mentor or life coach to achieve their goals. That's exactly what we've done.

We've designed this program where the program with the Credible Messengers lasts six months in which they meet on a weekly basis to focus on cognitive behavioral assessment, development and rapport with the Credible Messengers. The last three focused on job skills, and reincorporating with the family through counseling and sessions where they learn life skills and the challenges that they face as they go back into society.

On the employment front, which is a major hurdle, they had to have extended training on some of the life skills such as financial literacy, credentialing. The hardest part about getting a job for the re-offender was that there's no official list of kind of employers who are willing to say that they hire returning citizens. So the Credible Messengers played a very important role in matching and finding through their direct relationship with these employers to give these individuals a chance at employment.

Even after graduating the program - from the program, Credible Messengers served as a mentor role and support system by encouraging them and solving problems to make sure that they stay on the right track.

Upon graduating from the program, you know, the private sector partners provided each of the graduates with a new business suit, shirt and a tie. And the Credible Messengers then helped them preparing for the interview and getting the interview and stay on track. To date, 25 graduates have been released from our program which started in mid-2018, 60% of whom are doing well, are in regular contact with their mentors.

While releases have staggered throughout '19, I'm happy to report that most program participants have been out of prison for longer than six months. Two have exceeded a year, and after release, 70% found employment. And although four have reoffended, but there were none for violent crimes. This was significantly lower than the national and the state average.

As you can see, the program shows great promise but more study is needed. Therefore, I make the following recommendations for a jurisdiction that's looking for a Credible Messenger Program. Number one, for an effective community reentry program, a long-term commitment to train and support the Credible Messengers is necessary. So I recommend that recruiting, vetting, and retaining Credible Messengers and investment in training of these individuals to last for a period for at least three years.

Second, funding or grant resources for nonprofit organizations working with this population need to last longer than a year-to-year grant process to provide stability and long-term planning and investment.

And number three, we need to fund a research partner to serve as an independent evaluator for the program, and evaluate the outcomes to make sure that data tracking and reviews for continuous quality improvement is maintained.

To sum up, there's a phrase that the Credible Messengers often site to that sums up recidivism in general. They say, "Hurt people hurt people." The program is directed towards healing those reentering society by providing (seals) necessary to deal with issues by providing a support system to disrupt the cycle of recidivism.

For those of you who are interested in more information, please refer to the appendix that I have

submitted along with my written testimony or visit our website at www.justice.gov/usao-ndga/psn where there is contact information for experts in this area. Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to the panel.

Dean Kueter: Thank you Mr. Pak for your informative testimony and certainly your service to our country. Our next panelist is Director Nate Brown who serves as Director of Programs at the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. Director Brown, thank you for joining us today and you are recognized.

Nate Brown: Thank you, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and members of the commission for the opportunity to talk about the second chance implementation of the Kate Barnard Correctional Center. I am - my name is Nate Brown and I am the Director of Programs for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. I'm currently overseeing programs for all 24,000 inmates that we have in our 24 state facilities. We also have inmates in our three private facilities.

Programs Unit covers education, substance abuse treatment, cognitive-behavioral programming, vocational programming, volunteering, religious services, reentry services. One of the - reentry is the big topic that we want to talk about. So just to give a little headway, we had about 9,000 discharges last year and we're on track for that as well for this next year.

We talk about reentry as a whole and we say that reentry here begins with reception. So potentially everything that we're doing addresses some sort of area that we have identified as an area of need for these inmates. One of the other big things is that we develop a reentry plan that's specific, that covers it all-inclusive together.

So part of that reentry planning includes identification, residence, transportation, finances, social

support, legal issues, registration requirements, employment, program referrals for treatment, what kind of family and relationship obligations do they have, other services like veteran and tribal services that they have available and mental health needs and then obviously if they have any kind of post-supervision requirements.

But it's collectively that we're trying to make the whole better person. We know that the two components that make them the most successful on the outside is education and employment. And we're not just talking about employment -just general employment, we're talking about long-term, steady, viable employment that is going to allow the offender to sustain themselves or their family, whatever they need.

The education unit which is what I'm here to talk about is for the second chance currently is the largest unit in programs. We have over 80 certified teachers that have an average of 23 students per teacher. Our current enrollment is 1,840. That's 1,399 in regular education which consists of literacy, pre-high school education, high school education, and an additional 441 in college programming. We also have - our teachers also provides life skills reentry programming, so they are doing that as well.

We have seven current college and university partners and they operate in 13 of our state-run facilities. And our fiscal year which runs from July to June had - in FY19 we had 658 participants in college programs, and out of that we were awarded 20 degrees, 17 associates and 3 Bachelor's degrees. Our Second Chance Schools, we currently have two partners and that's Tulsa Community College and Langston University, which we started in 2016.

Two more of our partners got approved for the Second Chance Pell starting soon. And one of them is Rose State College. And we're really excited about both of them, but Rose State is

already operating in seven of our facilities using interactive TV services. So the addition of a Pell Grant should allow us to expand those services quite greatly.

But one of the - we were asked to talk specifically about Kate Bernard, the facility and how we implemented the program there. The Kate Bernard is a 250-bed female facility here in Oklahoma City. It has the benefit of being close to the city so it has a lot more resources than some of the facilities that are located in our rural areas.

We found that it's a feeder. It's a smaller facility that feeds off of our two larger female institutions. So people would get regular education services and then they would come to Kate Bernard and there was no college partnerships there. So we reached out to Langston and we decided that it would be excellent after - an excellent resource for the offenders there - to be able to pursue college, and Langston University actually had an outreach unit that's not too far from the facility itself.

Nate Brown: ...so it seems like a mutually beneficial need. We already had an MOA in place because they were operating in one of our other facilities. We brought it in. We had more than 80 inmates at the time apply or express interest in it and apply for it. We started out - this is our second semester right now, which has been a little bit hampered by the COVID-19 outbreak, but we're still continuing on with it. We have about three onsite classes in the first semester and we're down to one this semester. But we're making some adjustments to allow college coordination with one of our certified teachers there in the facility. So with that, I'm going to get into the recommendations that we had specifically pertaining to educational services.

Any kind of first conductive study or funding that supports technological advances and providing educational employment and resources to correctional systems for the purposes of reentry.

Anything - sometimes we operate in the dark days, so any kind of technology or infrastructure resource that supports technology in a correctional setting is going to be extremely beneficial for correctional services.

Second recommendation was - conduct studies of the types that college programs offered to incarcerated individuals versus the needs of business industry with a focus on high-demand fields. So we want to make sure that the college programs that we are offering actually tie into something that is going to be a relatable job source down the road.

The next recommendation that we have is support the additional Pell Initiative expansion and consider ways to aid in funding the project. Obviously, with a partnership like this, it's great, but more is more, and we could expand our offer. At a 250-bed facility, we found 80 participants - we could expand that across our system greatly.

The next recommendation is support efforts to reduce restrictive policies and the rules regarding licensure relative to crime, especially in high-demand areas. For example, there's a lot of conditions where you couldn't get any kind of license for like if they, you know, education even if it was a low-level offense in some states. So any kind of effort that helps reduce licensure restrictions would be beneficial.

The next recommendation was to study ways that would allow long-distance transfers of releasing inmates to high employment demand areas, including interstate opportunities. If we have offenders coming out and the jobs are far away, then there may be a way to coordinate and translate that so the bodies get to where the jobs are, so to speak.

The next recommendation was provide more funding for all-inclusive services and community-

directed dedicated to reentry, incorporating employment, education, and treatment services, particularly in rural areas.

We have several one-stop reentry sites here in the metro areas in Oklahoma - in Oklahoma City and Tulsa and, you know, Lawton, but we have a whole lot of rural areas that there's gaps. You know, we have large chunks of the state where there's just not much there.

The next recommendation was research and funding for infrastructure and technology that can promote distance learning and opportunities for justice-involved individuals, particularly in rural areas.

Here again - in our own state – even at the Department of Corrections we've got probation parole sub-offices that don't have good internet service out there. So if we're having difficulty getting internet service, then it may be difficult as well, for any kind of offender that wants to do any kind of distance learning or technology training.

And the last recommendation that we had was research and expand opportunities for technology sector training education and employment for justice-involved individuals such as coding and software development. We are - we have one of the last (mild) coding programs here in Oklahoma here in the Mabel Bassett Correctional Center which is not too far outside of the city, but it is training inmates on software coding which is a high-demand job, that can often be done remotely once they get out. It's a very successful program. Again, it's one of those things that if we can match the offender to the available jobs and then train them for that down the road, that would be a boon to where we need to be.

In closing, I would like to say that as a department, we are maximizing the resources available to

provide the programming opportunities to every inmate. This includes maximizing any available resource partnership in collaboration to the fullest extent. It's our - part of our mission to encourage positive change in the offender's behavior by providing rehabilitation programs and enabling successful reentry. Partnerships -- like the one with Langston and the Second Chance Pell Initiative -- help make that possible, so we really appreciate that.

If anybody wants any more information, they can reach out to me. My information is on that Department of Corrections web page. Thank you to the commission for the opportunity to speak to you guys.

Phil Keith: Thank you Director Brown for your valued testimony and your service. Dan, do you want to make the announcement?

Male: Yes sir, and all speakers who are doing the questions are actually in an open-line capacity, so any questions from the speakers, we don't need to facilitate the Q and A by pressing Star 1 since they're already in a talk-listen mode, unless we are intending to take participants' questions.

Phil Keith: Thank you Dan - and I would ask that everybody check their mic - phone to make sure it's on mute unless you're talking. Our final panelist today is Mr. John Wetzel who is the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. Secretary Wetzel has had a distinguished career and now serves on the oversight committee to the Federal First Step Act. Secretary Wetzel, thank you for joining us today, and you are recognized.

John Wetzel: Yes, thank you so much having me and certainly appreciate the work you all are doing. I know this work has been difficult in general -- but especially the past eight weeks, ten weeks whatever it is -- it's been exceedingly difficult. So I really want to commend you all for continuing

these meetings and it's important work.

I am the Secretary of Corrections for the state of Pennsylvania. I've been in this position for nine years. I oversee a prison system that has about 44,000 inmates in 25 prisons. In addition to that, I also oversee state parole which has about 41,000 individuals on parole in the community and about 18,000 employees. So I just want to briefly kind of touch on our approach to reentry - and it's a broad approach.

We don't look at reentry as a program, we look at reentry as a progression. And I think the best to understand how we want to think about individuals entering the community. And in Pennsylvania, we're talking about 20,000 people leaving our prisons every year. We want to think about it by reverse engineering it, and looking at what are the characteristics of people who come in our front door. And like my colleagues alluded to, there's a couple of things that really hop out.

Number one -- vast majority -- 40% of the folks who come in our prisons don't have a high school diploma. Education is a key component of keeping people out of the corrections system -or the criminal justice system - and being successful citizens. Addiction -- 70% -- and that's probably low-balling it because that's a self-reported number - of individuals who are suffering from a substance use disorder. And 21% of those -- or 21% of our new commitments -- are suffering from an opioid addiction, which is a significant increase over the past 10 years. And I think that's probably pretty consistent all over the place.

The third characteristic of our population is folks who suffer from significant mental illness, and that's nearly a third of our population. Those three areas are all very challenging and they're not discrete -- right. So there's a lot of overlap between those groups. Some other characteristics I think my colleague from Georgia alluded to - some of the unemployability is how I would call it.

People who don't have a long work history, if any, or certainly not legal work history - I should say. And that presents a challenge. You know, for someone to be a successful human being on the backend of our system, they're going to have to be able to be adequately employed.

And then the final thing is an alarming number of our new commitments suffer from homelessness coming in. So for that reason, and further how we think about reentry, is reentry is a continuum. My colleague from Oklahoma talked about how reentry begins at the front door, and it truly does. And I ask the commission to consider thinking about reentry as a process that does begin when someone comes in, and it really begins with assessing what are the criminogenic factors that led them to committing a crime in the first place.

So, some of the things we all mentioned -- addiction, mental illness, underemployment -- those kinds of things, oftentimes are driving forces in employment in some people and not others. So for us to have someone leave our system less likely to commit a crime when they came in, and make no bones about it -that's what our goal should be - to make someone less likely. So, we have to address those needs on an individual basis and it's one of the reasons why we've had, historically, such terrible outcome is because there can't be a paint-by-number situation. You have to individualize it and you have to localize it as important. Pennsylvania, like many states, is very big and very varied. So, what a re-entry plan, especially as it relates to how employment looks, for someone going back to Philadelphia versus Pittsburgh versus the center part of the state are all very different. And if we think we can take one approach for that, we're going to continue to fall short on those things.

So, you know, our first thing around employment that we did through a Department of Ed Grant from several years ago is really identifying at assessment, at when new commits come in, is assessing what their interests are as far as employment, and what their aptitude and ability is,

and then try and provide, try to provide vocational services to them that are consistent with what they have the ability to do. But as important, through this Grant, we created a strategic partnership with our folks at labor & industry to look specifically at what jobs are available in the area the individual is going back to.

Like I said, on the Federal level, I would think that this would be very relevant because obviously your Federal Bureau of Prisons sends people back to all 50 States. If you're providing vocational programming for a job that's not present in the State the individual's going back from, I'm not sure you've made progress. And the ancillary part of this is that when we spend money on reentry which I think we need to spend money on, we should spend it wisely. We should spend it on something that's going to move the needle as it relates to outcomes.

So from the employment standpoint, that's critical. But before you even get to that, addressing the addiction and the mental illness issues are significant. In both of those cases, that programming needs to follow them in the community, but all this needs to start while they're incarcerated. And so, we view the incarcerated period as a time to build the building blocks for success. So, addressing thinking areas, and some the cognitive and behavioral things that the vast majority of people come in with, and addressing specific needs around addiction.

We've been a state that's really double-downed on using medical assisted treatment, especially Vivitrol, for peopling coming out with opioids, and connecting them to that infrastructure in the community. And we do therapeutic communities at most of our prisons. As it specifically relates to reentry on the back end the number one challenge, even pre-COVID, is housing for these individuals and sustainable housing. We've been able to mitigate that through the use of halfway houses and we've even created a housing voucher program.

I'll mention in halfway houses, I think a best practice is certainly, performance contracts in halfway houses. In other words, we pay the providers of halfway house services based on the recidivism rate of people who go through them. So, if they lower the recidivism rate, they get a bonus. If they keep it within one standard deviation of the average, they get their normal pay. And if the recidivism rate of people who go through those halfway houses increases in two successive six-month periods, I fire them. And that's kind of critical - I think incentives work when we partner with a private sector. And I also think there has to be accountability for not getting outcomes if we're making this huge investment.

As it relates to employment, I talked about strategic partnerships with labor and industry. So, I think one of the big basic things - two of the basic things - that we have to take care of, is making sure individuals have identification cards coming out of prison. And they're connected to some healthcare entity especially, even pre-COVID, but especially post-COVID. We've been able to achieve this, first of all, with identifications by partnering with our Department of Transportation. We have about a 90% rate of people leaving with their state-issued identification card.

And then secondly, turning medical assistance or making sure they're reconnected with their private insurance, if they had that. And again, we have about a 75% rate with that. I think these are key components of reentry. As it relates to recommendations I think, my colleague from Oklahoma talked extensively about education. Higher Ed at prison is a no brainer. I think that what we've found it's been a mutually-beneficial partnership. And at some universities, especially some community colleges, really benefit from the partnership.

I think we should really focus on assessing educational needs, providing education. And related to that, technical education, which is an underserved area, and certainly, again, before COVID, was an underserved area. So, I really think that that's a critical piece of the puzzle. And implicit in

that, is that we partner with labor and industry and the labor folks so we understand what the employment needs are in the community.

Secondly, addiction, I think that the use of medication assisted treatment -creating a continuum of care - and those kinds of things for individuals suffering from addiction is a critical piece of it. I think that removing barriers and identification is an example of that. Getting someone an identification card, which is admittedly much more difficult at the federal level than at the state level, is a critical piece and it will be a barrier. I mean, you can't buy cough syrup without an ID. I don't know how we can expect someone to be successful without an ID.

And then the big one is housing. And we've done some things using halfway houses with some, frankly, mixed results- even though we performance contract that. We've experimented fairly significantly with housing vouchers and they're really working in that direction with using housing vouchers coupled with mentoring. Similar to the Federal program, the gentlemen from Georgia discussed, with having a mentor who has credibility to the individual and helping through the housing thing.

I would just quickly mention as I wrap up here. That's it really important as you're talking about re-entry. That we really reset our expectations coming out of this COVID situation and I'll tell you specifically the impact it's had on Pennsylvania. We, prior to COVID, we had a 65% employment rate for people on parole, and that's, in a large part, because of these things I talked about - starting when they come through the door and those kinds of things. That's dropped well below 50% and by next month, I assume that's going to be 30%.

Our halfway houses, and using the halfway houses for housing, is a completely different dynamic now. We have 35 halfway houses. We currently have 7 that aren't taking new commitments because they're in quarantine because of COVID. So, I think that this is important work and I

think reentry in general is a challenge. But I think a key piece of this, and one of the things you may want to think about, is the impact that COVID has had, and will continue to have over the next 18 to 24 months on reentry. With that, I'll wrap up and thank you very much for your time today.

Phil Keith: Thank you Secretary Wetzel for your testimony and your distinguished service.

Commissioners, we are now open for questions for the witnesses. Commissioners with questions, please state your name prior to your question, and direct a question to a specific panelist. Or, if it's for response from the entire panel, please state so. Just as a reminder to the Commissioners, your mics are hot at all times. With that, thank you, and Commissioners, we're open for questions. Commissioners with questions for our panelists.

Erica MacDonald: Phil, this is Erica MacDonald. May I ask a question please?

Phil Keith: Yes Ma'am. You're recognized.

Erica MacDonald: Thank you very much. BJay, Hi, It's Erica MacDonald. I have a question for you.

Are there any other U.S. Attorney Offices that have had a credible message program such as this? I hadn't heard of it until I heard about your work which sounds fantastic. And do you know of even either state or local that has had such a similar success with a credible message or program?

BJ PAK: Well, I don't there if there's any other of our colleagues have adopted a program like this.

I will mention, I think that they're catching on at the state level. One of the benefits that we had, and I think the Commissioners are going to hear from the Warden of the Metro reentry facility that we're partnering with. But it takes, it takes more than just, you know, seed funding and a few

personnel to kind of make this work. And so, it's daunting in that context and our relationship with the DOC, the Department of Corrections here, as the other two panelists have said.

I think that's the reason why our program has at least shown some great promise in the beginning. I'm willing to share my information, what we've done, and what kind of an errors and trials and tribulations that we went through with anybody who would like information on that. But having seen this program work itself out, and I've spoken to the first graduating class, and this is different from kind of the other types of reentry initiatives that I've been involved in.

You know I served on the state level Criminal Justice Reform Council prior to coming on board. But I hope that this, my testimony and information provided, would spur some other district to kind of look at what can they could do in conjunction with their local Department of Corrections.

Erica MacDonald: You know, BJay, we have a reentry program here in Minnesota and we don't have such a program. I'm really going to lean on you to look at it because I think it's great work that you do and thank you very much. I appreciate it.

BJ PAK: You're welcome. Thank you.

Phil Keith: Other Commissioners with questions? Other Commissioners with questions for our panelists?

Don Washington: Hey Phil, this is Don Washington. I've got a question for Mr. Brown.

Phil Keith: Yes sir. You're recognized.

Don Washington: Thank you sir. Mr. Brown, just curious, because I had a difficult time hearing part of your presentation. But did you address and if you didn't, would you please address how it is that you motivate the folks who enter into the education part of the program. ?

And what keeps them motivated such that they get to the point, as you say, that 20 of men just in last fiscal year ended up with degrees, 17 associates, 13 bachelors. Just curious as to what is it that gets them to the point where they want to earnestly participate in the education program and then succeed at it so that they have a better life going forward?

Nate Brown: Thank you for the question. Motivation for most of our education unit is simply a matter of showing them what they can achieve on the outside, and we have success stories throughout the system that actually aid in that. We have one offender at one of our female facilities that, she was incarcerated, she got her regular high school degree, she got a college degree. And she went on and after she graduated from college, she started college programs inside the system, and then she went on and she became an attorney. So, she actually practices law in Oklahoma and Texas.

So, we have that. And we've shifted, the last few years, to greatly parse out how important reentry is. And so, we're honing in, not just our programs but through security and other methods. Keeping the inmates motivated to be there. Obviously, you know, we have behavior issues sometimes with them. For those that choose to be in college, that's pretty much all self-driven. When we show offenders, you know, their earning potential down the road of what they can make with a degree.

And, you know, better provide for themselves and for their families when they get out, it's just kind of a, it's intuitive. And we just keep honing that along the way and we keep, you know, all of our certified teachers just keep pushing that and we're showing them those opportunities as they go

through. Did that answer your question well?

Don Washington: Yes, sir. Thank you very much. Sounds like you have a fantastic program.

Thanks much.

Nate Brown: Thank you.

Phil Keith: Other Commissioners with questions for our panelists?

(John Samaniego): Chairman, this is John Samaniego .

Phil Keith: Yes, you are recognized.

(Keith Jones): I have a question for Mr., Secretary Wetzel. I noticed you had a significant career in county corrections, being a warden of a county jail with where you significantly reduced the population there. Can you tell me, just give me an outline on how you were able to do that?

John Wetzel: Yes and thank you. I called it, my days in the county, the "good old days" because I really loved that environment. And it was, it was, you know, the blueprint for that was really pretty basic, and I will tell you a little bit about Franklin County, Pennsylvania. It's a small rural county, very conservative, conservative Christian County, like 2/3's of the voters are straight-ticket Republicans. And went in with a significantly growing jail population so we really identified what the drivers of the population were, and in many cases it was programming needs, it was addiction. It was the kinds of stuff we talked about today.

One of the kind of urban legends of that area was that the individuals in jail were mostly from out

of the area. Franklin County is at the intersection of Route 30 and Route 81 so the assumption was most of the folks were from out of the area. When we looked at the data, we saw that in fact the vast majority of folks were not only from Franklin County, but were born within 50 miles of Franklin County at a rate about 65%.

So, we engaged in a religious community. They really bought in and understood the value and really tried to get people out of the system altogether and doing it without just using incarceration. And so, we focused on creating a programming infrastructure to include a day reporting center and used treatment as the, the number one thing, when it could be used, and we could ensure public safety. We started doing some pretrial risk assessment, even back in 2007 before folks were talking about it.

We started doing it and not in a complicated way. We actually used interns from a local university to help us do that. We were able to target who needed to be incarcerated and we reduced recidivism by providing these programs. And a combination of those two helped us reduce our population by about 20%. Thanks for that question.

(Keith Jones): Thank you for the response. That's a significant event.

Phil Keith: Other Commissioners with questions for our panelists? Other Commissioners with questions for our panelists?

Hearing no further questions, I want to close by thanking our panelists once again for your time and your most valuable testimony and the responses to the questions from our Commissioners. On behalf of the Attorney General and his leadership team of Rachel Bissex and Jeff Favitta and all the Commissioners. Your contributions provided today are most sincerely appreciated and will

assist the Commission in their deliberations and work.

Before we close, just a reminder that our next two hearings this week will be on Wednesday and Thursday, as we will wrap up hearings on reentry tomorrow. And then shift our focus on Thursday to criminal justice grants and processes. Also, please check the President's Commission page for additional updates and documents and information on the main Justice website. We'll update that regularly when information is made available for posting.

But we want to thank the FBI for their continued support for providing their teleconference network to the Commission and certainly all the Federal program managers who work diligently behind the scenes to support the efforts of the Commission and the working groups. Any questions or comments from the Commissioners?

If there's no further business for us today, this President's Commission is adjourned. Thank you again Commissioners for your dedication and your commitment.

Erica MacDonald: Thank you.

Group: Thanks Phil.

Phil Keith: Thank you.

Operator: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. This concludes today's presentation. You may now disconnect.