



State of New Jersey

STATE PAROLE BOARD

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Media Release

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Parole, Trenton Launch Employment-Based Reentry Program

*State Parole Board, Trenton MOET
Will Target Returning Parolees with Federal Grant*

TRENTON – Chairman Peter J. Barnes Jr. today joined Mayor Douglas H. Palmer in announcing a \$500,000 Federal grant, secured by the State Parole Board, to create **Greater Mercer PRI**: an employment-centered reentry program that will target area ex-offenders.

Previously, the State Parole Board and the Trenton Mayor's Office of Employment and Training (MOET) worked separately to help ex-offenders overcome the challenges that face them upon leaving prison and reentering the community. The new model will emphasize regional collaboration.

The grant, from the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI), will allow the State Parole Board and MOET to unite, along with the New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC) and Opportunities for All (OFA), a non-profit organization that contracts with the State Parole Board to provide reentry services such as counseling and training.

Under Governor Corzine's Another Chance reentry initiative, Greater Mercer PRI will focus specifically on helping parolees find jobs and – more importantly – *stay employed* in those jobs. Mentoring, case management, job training, job retention and strict parole supervision all will serve to uphold those goals.

“Successful reentry depends on the right programs, a well-trained parole officer, and the parolee's commitment to rejoin society and turn away from crime,” Chairman Barnes said. “It also benefits from a real assessment of the individual parolee's risks and needs, and a case plan based on those individual needs. The most important programs are the ones that will help a parolee find and keep a good job. The research shows when ex-offenders can help support their families, the public becomes safer.”

“American cities and small towns must face the issue of re-entry and do it right,” Mayor Palmer said. “In New Jersey, we spend \$36,000 on each prisoner – and have nearly 16,000 adult and juvenile ex-offenders returning from state correctional facilities – every year. Business leaders, like our MOET Advisory Board, and supportive agencies at all levels, are finding ways to help ex-offenders redirect their lives. With another chance, supported by job training, placement, and retention efforts to help them become productive, law-abiding citizens – ex-of-

fenders can find pathways to success in the future. They can restore stability to their families, and save taxpayer dollars. This is a no-brainer, and the MOET Advisory Board and the State Parole Board are important change agents.”

The State Parole Board will launch Greater Mercer PRI at the beginning of the new year. Beginning in January, State Parole Board parole counselors will identify inmates who will eventually return to areas supervised by the State Parole Board’s District Office in Trenton; and work with DOC to ensure the inmates receive appropriate rehabilitative programs in prison.

“When I visited Father Gregory Boyle’s ‘Homeboy Industries’ anti-gang program through the US Conference of Mayors, I learned from Father Boyle that the *best* reentry program is the one that commences soon after incarceration,” said Carolyn Lewis-Spruill, Director of Health and Human Services for Trenton. “This is analogous to the challenges we face in medical treatment; it would be unthinkable to plan surgery without fully understanding all aspects of the rehabilitative process. What works for medicine works as well for this field: For *society’s* and the *individual’s* and their *families’* sake, we have to plan reentry early and carry it out with a full understanding of the costs and benefits at stake.”

The parole counselors will develop an individualized case plan for each inmate, based on the inmate’s clinically assessed risks and needs. The case plan will include programs such as mentoring, job training and education, job placement and job retention services, to be administered in partnership with MOET and OFA. Parole officers will hold the parolees accountable for their own successful participation in the community-based services.

The State Parole Board, MOET and OFA will collect and archive data about each parolee. The Rutgers Newark School of Criminal Justice will use this data to assess the program’s effectiveness in promoting public safety and reducing recidivism; find areas for improvement; and judge the best ways the program can be replicated.

The City of Trenton Mayor’s Office of Employment and Training is dedicated to assisting unemployed Trenton residents with assessment, placement, training, and retention services, in collaboration with U.S., State of New Jersey and Mercer County agencies; faith-based and non-profit organizations; and private sector partners.

The New Jersey State Parole Board (SPB) is New Jersey’s lead reentry agency, and works to ensure ex-prisoners return to society as law-abiding citizens. As required by law, appointed Parole Board Members and staff conduct more than 20,000 hearings per year, solicit input from victims and decide parole matters. SPB sworn parole officers supervise more than 15,000 offenders statewide. In addition, SPB is New Jersey’s primary law enforcement agency responsible for sex offender supervision. SPB officers are also active partners with multiple Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies and task forces. Finally, SPB’s Community Programs Division partners with government, non-profit and private agencies to connect ex-prisoners with vocational, mental health and related services, targeted to break the cycle and reduce risk of crime.

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