

# The Journal Gazette

(/)

---

## JGINDIANA (/NEWS/LOCAL/INDIANA)

---

Wednesday, September 20, 2017 1:00 am

# DOC cost-saving move disappoints

NIKI KELLY | The Journal Gazette

INDIANAPOLIS – Lawmakers heard Tuesday that efforts to reduce costs at the Indiana Department of Correction and divert offenders to programs such as community corrections and probation haven't been as successful as hoped.

Chris Johnston of KSM Consulting delivered a report to the Interim Study Committee on Corrections and Criminal Code on the reform that started mid-2014 and its associated cost-savings. It was paid for by the DOC.

Lawmakers worked for five years to reform Indiana's criminal code in an effort to stem the state's exploding prison population and transfer savings from there to local communities. Low-level felony offenders were diverted; some sentences were lightened and some stiffened.

The defining legislation was House Bill 1006 and that is the moniker used to describe the effort.

The KSM report revealed that average monthly commitments to the DOC have dropped from 647 offenders to about 125.

But Johnston said there has been little movement on those moving into community corrections and probation. Instead, it's almost a one-to-one transfer from the state prison cells to local jail cells.

"It's just more in jail and fewer in prison," said Rep. Ed Delaney, D-Indianapolis. "I thought one of our goals

was to beef up the percentage of those going to community corrections and probation.”

Indianapolis Republican Sen. Mike Young responded by saying: “You're right. We didn't want them necessarily in jail. We wanted to get them into programs.”

The state has funneled millions into more staff in both community corrections –such as work release or home detention – as well as probation and addiction treatment. Caseloads have dropped, several people testified Tuesday, but locals haven't been able to keep up the shift in sentencing.

KSM also said the state had an estimated operating savings of about \$1.88 million plus one-time savings of \$2.48 million from closing a facility.

The report indicated, though, that overall costs and obligations are up.

Several lawmakers questioned those results.

Johnston said the state's fixed costs on buildings and staff don't drop commiserate with the population – similar to an argument schools make when their student count drops and lawmakers take money away.

Young said he understands if one person leaves a room the cost for lights is the same. But he noted there are 5,400 fewer prisoners and questioned why beds can't be consolidated to close parts or all of more facilities.

DOC chief of staff Randy Koester reminded the group the state is still paying local jails a \$35 per day for the low-level felons. The composition of prisoners – for instance gender and security-level – also makes consolidation difficult.

“1006 in my opinion didn't work,” said Sen. Greg Taylor, D-Indianapolis. “We just transferred the liability.”

[nkelly@jg.net](mailto:nkelly@jg.net) (mailto:nkelly@jg.net)

---

**Copyright © 2017 [www.journalgazette.net](http://www.journalgazette.net)**

600 W. Main Street

Fort Wayne IN 46802

[Terms of use and privacy policy \(/terms-of-use/\)](#)

[Site map \(/site-index/\)](#)