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In order to completely understand the staffing needs of the Department of Corrections, one must fully define "staffing" as it applies to all aspects of the Department. When looking at staffing levels for the Department, there are two aspects which must be taken under consideration. First is the staffing levels that would be considered at the global level of the entire Department, and the second is the local level which considers each Institution separately. The global level has been under quite extensive scrutiny for some time now, so this letter is intended to more clearly define the needs of the department at the Institutional levels.

In stating the obvious, the intent is to lay a foundation that does not exist in the global view of staffing. Each of the Institutions run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. To do this, the daily operations must be split into separate shifts, and has unique operational procurements that are dependant on several factors. Just as the Department is under the umbrella of the mission statement, each shift must complete separate missions that are unique to the timeframe of individual activities. For instance, the dayshift must schedule activities based on the culinary feeding, Prison Industries operations, mail sorting, yard time, etc. During this time, there are fewer Institutional counts, fewer inmates in the units, etc. On night shift, all of the inmates are in the units, and there are many more tours and counts that must be accomplished. During each of the shifts, there needs to be extreme flexibility when considering staff assignments. This flexibility must be maintained throughout each of the shifts in order to maintain proper staffing in any given area at any given time; whereas the global staffing of the Department is not as flexible in that Institutions cannot as easily move officers from one place to another. This is a major difference in the staffing needs and the perception that both global and local staffing needs are the same. The Legislator has approved only so many positions for the Department. When these positions are filled, it is perceived that the Department is fully staffed, and for Departmental purposes, this may be true. However, when viewed from the local level, there are several factors that come into play that the Global staffing requirements do not need to consider.

Although the relief factor considers annual leave, sick leave and some training, it cannot anticipate such things as military leave, unanticipated high sick leave, higher levels of hospital coverage, extra-curricular training activities, administrative leave, etc. There are many types of leave that can cause a shift to run grossly understaffed. Pull and shut

down positions can soften the blow in some cases, but there are times where a shift is under the threat of going below the minimum safe staffing levels for the Institution.

For these reasons, the NCA stands by the following suggestions as a way to ensure that staffing levels are at a safe level for all who enter the Institution.

1. That all the monies allocated for staffing the Institutions be kept in the budget to be used as they were intended; to staff the shifts. This is a necessity to pay overtime when the need arises. There must be a cushion maintained so that unforeseen obstacles to daily staffing can be averted, and the Institution can maintain an acceptable level of security. Hiring more officers would be a factor to consider, but the possibility would still exist for them to come up short on the Institutional staffing, ergo the need for overtime.

2. Individuals who choose law enforcement as a job, are more than likely choosing this profession as a lifelong career. For this reason, many of us choose to start a family, train only in this profession, and dedicate our lives to our chosen career. This is why the NCA would like to make a strong stand to attempt to sway lawmakers to consider a break in the nearly 4 years of stagnant pay that has been devastating to these career minded individuals who help to keep the public safe. Throughout these 4 years, the Department has lost many good officers to higher paying professions. Officers hired within this timeframe now have up to 5 years of experience, and to see them leave because of pay is heartbreaking. Many of those who have stayed, are now collecting food stamps and other government assistance. The NCA looks at this, and sees a travesty. The amount of time and training given to these individuals, necessitates that we look closer at retention by increasing the pay of these officers to a level commensurate with the experience that they have gained over this time.

In order of priority, we must place the shift staffing at number one. To help accomplish this, overtime is needed to avert immediate staffing problems by hiring officers on very short notice when the need arises. Second is to retain trained officers, and minimize the cost to train new officers both in the classroom and on the Institution. Officers must be paid a livable wage so that the Departments long term stability will be maintained by having a trained workforce to instruct those who will enter this profession 10, 15 or 20 years from now.

Thank you for considering these very important issues, and for considering our viable solutions.