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June 14, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable J.B. Pritzker, Governor, State of Illinois
The Honorable Don Harmon, President of the Senate
The Honorable Emanuel “Chris” Welch, Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Honorable John Curran Minority Leader of the Senate
The Honorable Tony McCombie, Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
The Honorable Alexi Giannoulias, Secretary of State
Latoya Hughes, Acting Director, Illinois Department of Corrections

FROM: Clayton Klenke, Executive Director

RE: Advisory Opinion of the Commission on Government Forecasting and
Accountability Regarding the Closure of the Stateville Correctional Center

The Department officially notified the Commission of its intent to close the Stateville Correctional Center on March 17, 2024. According to the State Facilities Closure Act (30 ILCS 608/5-10): “In the case of a proposed closure of: (i) a prison, youth center, work camp, or work release center operated by the Department of Corrections; (ii) a school, mental health center, or center for the developmentally disabled operated by the Department of Human Services; or (iii) a residential facility operated by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, the Commission must require the executive branch officers to file a recommendation for closure. The recommendation must be filed within 30 days after the Commission delivers the request for recommendation to the State executive branch officer.”

The Commission requested the required recommendation on March 27, 2024. The Department submitted its recommendation for closure to the Commission on April 26, 2024. The Commission conducted two public hearings. The first hearing was on May 10, 2024, in Springfield, where the Department of Corrections and employee unions provided testimony on the proposed closure. Another hearing was held near Stateville Correctional Center on June 11, 2024, in Joliet. At this hearing, local stakeholders were given time to provide their input into the process.

In their initial announcement regarding the closure, the Department estimated that Stateville Correctional Center would not close prior September 13, 2024, which was 180 days from March 17, 2024. In the recommendation for closure to the Commission, the Department of Corrections detailed their justification for the proposed closure of Stateville Correctional Center. According to the Department, the Stateville facility faces numerous physical design issues due to its age and usage. These issues restrict space for "out-of-cell time" and other inmate services. The facility's limited lines of sight necessitate additional staff for safety and monitoring. Additionally, the facility requires extensive repairs, including cell renovations, shower upgrades, masonry and roofing fixes, kitchen refurbishments, and electrical upgrades. Documents provided to the Commission estimate that addressing these deferred maintenance issues would cost over \$250 million. Moreover, depending on the outcome of an ongoing class action lawsuit regarding conditions at Stateville Correctional Center, a court order might mandate immediate repairs or relocation of current inmates. The Department believes that utilizing some of the extensive unused grounds at Stateville Correctional Center to rebuild the facility with modern standards and housing options is preferable to repairing the existing facility.

Opponents of the proposed closure raised several concerns regarding personnel, inmate access to services, and the timing of closure and rebuilding. They argued that closing the existing Stateville facility before the new one is fully constructed and operational would unduly disrupt both staff and inmates. They proposed operating the current facility concurrently with the construction of the new one and transitioning operations once the new facility is complete. Under the Department's plan, staff from Stateville would be relocated to different locations, some requiring extended commute times, which would complicate their lives and affect their families. Additionally, opponents pointed out that maintaining current standards of medical, social, and educational services would be challenging or impossible at the proposed alternative facilities while the new facility is under construction. These facilities lack the necessary physical accommodations and agreements with service providers, such as educational institutions.

Advisory Opinion

Due to a **lack of a quorum** at the June 14, 2024 hearing on the proposed closure of Logan Correctional Center, the Commission was **unable to hold a vote** to provide an advisory opinion. Commission members were, however, offered an opportunity to give their thoughts on the facility closure process and the plan put forth by the Department of Corrections.

Co-Chair Koehler

Senator Koehler presented three main points in his statement. First, he felt that the Department had brought a concept to the Commission, not a fully-developed plan. He noted that most people providing input during this process supported building new facilities to replace those at Logan and Stateville that are worn down from decades of deferred maintenance by the State. He suggested that while Stateville seemed to need a complete rebuild, Logan Correctional Center had "sound bones but bad interiors" and

could potentially be refurbished at a lower cost than a full replacement. Additionally, Senator Koehler proposed splitting the 1,500 beds for female inmates between two new facilities, one in Logan County and one at the Stateville site. His second point was that Stateville should remain open while a replacement facility is built nearby. He believed this approach would reduce the risk of losing valuable employees during the building process. Finally, he emphasized the need for the Department to better engage with all stakeholders (employees, families, the incarcerated, and the local community) to minimize harm during this process. He suggested that the Commission reengage with the Department at a later date when a more detailed plan is available.

Co-Chair Davidsmeyer

Representative Davidsmeyer agreed that there is a need for new correctional facilities. He also believed that Illinois' current situation was self-inflicted. He felt that if the current plan proceeded as it stands, the City of Lincoln would be destroyed. Similar to Senator Koehler, he offered to collaborate with the Department and the Administration to develop a better plan for both facilities. Representative Davidsmeyer asserted that Logan's central location was advantageous, as it would have lower building and training costs compared to Will County. He described the plan as more of a "thought bubble" than a detailed proposal. Representative Davidsmeyer viewed the proposed building projects as not shovel-ready and more of a 7-year plan rather than a 3-year plan. He noted that Department employees likely felt the State considered them easily replaceable. He believed this process would push people into early retirement, drive people out of the State, and negatively affect workers' pensions. In conclusion, Representative Davidsmeyer stated that the construction of a new Stateville facility should start immediately with the current facility remaining open as long as possible, while the Department works with stakeholders on Logan Correctional Center.

Senator DeWitte

Senator DeWitte expressed significant disappointment with the process. He felt that the situation should have been addressed in May during the budgeting process. He criticized the lack of details in what seemed like a rushed process. He believed the Governor's office had not been involved and that "two cities and two counties have every right to be upset." Senator DeWitte believed the local communities deserved reliable answers. He noted that the prison population in Illinois has been shrinking, yet the State is investing in more beds at Stateville, which did not make sense to him. He could not support the closure of these two facilities and called for "more transparency, more clarification, and more answers." He looked forward to working with the Department and the Administration to develop a better plan.

The Commission will update this document with any additional written statements provided by commission members.