

HB 2143: Reduction of duplicate audits of county jails

Testimony to Committee

I'm bringing you this bill on behalf of the State and Local Government Efficiency Task Force, another in a series of cleaning out the closet. State and local officials working in the criminal justice system recognized that we were auditing county jails twice. One of those audits covers over 309 facets of jail operations, and the other audit covers 14 standards. We think the audit that reviews more, and *includes* those 14, is better – and sufficient – and we're recommending you remove the requirement for that 2nd audit. This bill does *not* change policy, or change the standards for what's being audited.

Here's a little more background.

Oregon law¹ requires the Department of Corrections (or DOC) to conduct inspections of county jails. It outlines 14 standards that must be met to ensure compliance with the *Standards for local correctional facilities* established in statute. The Oregon State Sheriffs Association has developed a Peer Audit system: county jail employees from various counties conduct audits on unrelated county jails, that is, NOT from the one being audited.

At one time, the DOC staff conducted their reviews independently from the county jail peer review team. As a result of enhanced relationships between the DOC and the Sheriffs Association, two DOC employees now conduct their audit *in concert with* the county peer audit team. [DOC pays for two retired Community Corrections employees to conduct the county jail audits.]

Those 14 standards that the state audit covers includes topics such as staffing that is sufficient to provide security, control, custody and supervision; written policies for nine topics such as medical procedures and medication, release process, telephone calls, and visitation; meals; clothing; and emergency plans.

The county sheriffs' audit book, in comparison, is 164 pages of detailed instructions, advice and best practices, on topics such as daily hygiene, biohazard training for staff, volunteers and community resources like religious services, frequency and duration of exercise, laundering, cross-gender searches, inmate accessible areas, and inmate rules. It covers those 14 state standards, and it covers lots more.

In developing this recommendation, the Criminal Justice Subcommittee of the Task Force contacted various stakeholders including the state DOC, Oregon State Sheriffs Association, Jail Commanders, and the Association of Oregon Counties.

¹ ORS 169.070