

## GOVERNMENT

# Costs climbing for county jails

Marion County Jailer Barry Brady discusses the increasing costs of incarceration with legislators

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The costs to incarcerate continue to climb for Marion County, as well as every other community in the state that operates a jail.

While county jails were never intended to do more than simply warehouse inmates, Marion County Jailer Barry Brady and his staff have gone above and beyond that for the inmates they serve to help them become productive members of society rather than repeat offenders.

And, doing so costs more money.

Brady, who has been jailer since 2002, has seen his budget increase by nearly \$2 million in the past 12 years. Yet, the per diem charge the state pays to house state inmates has stayed the same since 2005.

Brady discussed that and much more when he was invited to speak at the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government's meeting on Aug. 22 in Frankfort.

Before giving his presentation to the committee, State Sen. Jimmy Higdon introduced Brady, and gave some remarks of his own.

"There's a lot of pressure on counties and county jails," Higdon said. "Not all jails are created equal. Some jails work very hard to offer every program that they can offer. Some jails, the only thing they can do is warehouse prisoners. Three hots and a cot."

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Higdon said it's time the state begins to consider "performance base funding" for jails.

"The jails that do more and are accredited... If jails step up and do that, we need to pay them to do that," Higdon said. "We haven't changed our rates to county jails in quite some time. We need to reward the jails that have programs for inmates that give them an opportunity to succeed when they get out."

According to Justice and Public Safety Cabinet Secretary John Tilly, who also spoke during the meeting, there are 76 jails in Kentucky, but fewer than a third of them offer any sort of program (substance abuse program, re-entry program, etc.) In addition to housing their own county's inmates, county jails house half of the state's inmates, as well, Tilly said. County jails get paid \$31.34 a day from the state to house state inmates. However, the state pays private prisons, such as Lee Adjustment Center, \$57.68 per day, per inmate. That fact, which was mentioned several times during Brady's presentation, was barely mentioned by legislators when they had an opportunity to ask questions.

State Rep. Ken Fleming, who represents part of

Jefferson and Oldham counties, asked about comparing a county jail to a private prison and if that was comparing "apples to apples."

Brady said he would welcome that comparison.

"I welcome an opportunity for an independent person to compare us to the private sector," Brady said Thursday afternoon following the meeting. "I would welcome the challenge of comparing apples to apples on results."

Brady said his entire purpose of speaking to the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government was to show the value of county jails and what facilities, such as the Marion County Detention Center, provide the state.

But, with a lack of discussion on the pay discrepancy between county jails and private prisons, he's not sure his message was heard.

"It's been 13 years since we've had any adjustment to the per diem," Brady said. "It's frustrating. It appears my message wasn't heard the way I wanted it to be heard."

## 'Groundbreaking work at this jail'

Secretary Tilly took time to compliment Brady and the Marion County Detention Center staff for the work they do to help

inmates re-enter society with the skills necessary to be successful.

"They are doing groundbreaking work at this jail," Tilly said. "Nobody is doing it better than Barry Brady."

MCDC offers inmates a variety of programs to help inmates with addictions, anger management, parenting, socialization skills, victimization and reintegration. Inmates can also take classes to earn their GED, and participate in work programs.

"His programming is outstanding," Secretary Tilly said. "Inmates want to be in this jail because they know they'll get programming."

The moment Brady was elected jailer, he began working to offer a clinical approach to help inmates recover and gain control over their addictions by offering treatment programs. And the drug problem continues to get worse with each passing day. That translates to not only more inmates being incarcerated at the jail, but also more expense for the jail in dealing with inmates' mental health issues, medical emergencies, detox therapies and increased security risks.

"With the drug addiction we're met with, we're finding ourselves having to use force more and more,"

## The rising cost of incarceration at MCDC

(Information provided by Marion County Jailer Barry Brady.)

### Total budget

2005-06: \$2,891,579

2017-18: \$4,870,627

### Increasing cost factors:

#### Wages:

2005-06: \$1,122,824

2017-18: \$1,978,700

#### Medical:

2005-06: \$212,371

2017-18: \$624,573

#### Food service:

2005-06: \$251,499

2017-18: \$441,000

#### Projected cost to house at MCDC (per inmate):

2005: \$14.71

2018: \$44.11 (projected)

Brady said.

MCDC has 297 beds, with 208 of them being evidence based program beds, offering inmates programs to help them reintegrate into society.

"The more we can expand on that, we need to," Brady said.

MCDC also helps inmates earn their GED while serving their sentence. So far this year, 23 inmates have earned their GED at MCDC.

Secretary Tilly said a lack of education is a predictor of prison, but the No. 1 problem is mental illness.

"Our jails and prisons are filled with those who are mentally ill," he said. "Many of them also suffer from an addiction. People are self-medicating."

State Rep. Steve Riggs, who represents part of

Jefferson County, said addressing inmates' mental health should be the first priority – before education or job training.

Rep. Riggs also expressed a concern about performance based funding for jails. He's concerned some jailers would choose not to offer additional programming because it involves more work.

"What if we do performance based funding and we have jail management that would prefer the status quo?" Riggs said. "Maybe they're lazy. Maybe they're satisfied with what they have now? The jail management wouldn't suffer ... the inmates would suffer."

Rep. Riggs asked what the incentive would be for jails to offer programs for

# Jail

Continued from A2

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inmates.

“I don’t know what the incentive is unless they’re good leaders to begin with,” he said. “Some inmates will prosper better because their jail management is better.”

Sen. Dan “Malano” Seum, who represents Bullitt County and part of Jefferson County, asked why there was so much focus on the GED program at jails.

“Why do we get caught up with the GED program? I’m not sure it even has value today,” he said.

He said there should be more focus on training inmates in a trade. Seum said when a plumber comes to his house he doesn’t ask him if he earned his high school diploma. He just wants to know he can fix his plumbing problem.

“In my mind, the best thing to be doing would be trying to certify these people in something,” Sen. Seum said.

Jailer Brady believes Sen. Seum would think differently if he attended a GED graduation ceremony at MCDC.

“The accomplishment is proven to curb recidivism,” Brady said following last week’s meeting. “It’s pride and dignity. The day you

hand him that diploma – the smile on his face – he has something that will stay with him for the rest of his days. You don’t lose your education.”

The ultimate goal, according to State Rep. George Brown Jr. (Fayette), should be to provide inmates with the education, job training and confidence needed to get a job and support themselves financially when they get back into the real world.

“If we don’t provide folks with an opportunity to participate in the mainstream economy,” Brown said, “they will go back to the underground economy to make a living.”