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Fiscal Note

March 13, 2025

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H.219 – An act relating to creating a family support pilot program for incarcerated parents and guardians

As recommended by the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions¹

Bill Summary

This bill requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish the Family Support Program, which would provide free parenting and family support services to incarcerated parents and guardians in Vermont correctional facilities. It instructs DOC to implement the Program via a phased approach, beginning with the Chittenden Regional and Northern State Correctional Facilities before expanding the program statewide, contingent on additional appropriations, with the intent of expanding to all Vermont correctional facilities by 2028.

Fiscal Impact

The bill appropriates \$383,579 from the General Fund to DOC in fiscal year 2026 to implement the Family Support Program at the Chittenden Regional and Northern State Correctional Facilities.

The bill also directs DOC to develop a plan to expand this program to all Vermont correctional facilities by 2028 and to propose ongoing funding for trauma-informed family support services in future budget proposals submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with 32 V.S.A. § 306. While the bill does not contain an associated appropriation to fund this requirement, it could increase future costs, depending on the amount of funds proposed and the extent to which these budget proposals are enacted in future years.

Background and Details

The following sections of the bill have a fiscal impact.

Sections 1-3: Establishing the Family Support Program

Section 1 expresses legislative intent that DOC develop a phased plan to establish a statewide Family Support Program for all Vermont correctional facilities by 2028.

Section 2 requires the Commissioner to include funding to sufficiently provide and sustain trauma-informed family support services in all future DOC budget proposals submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 306.

¹ *The Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) is a nonpartisan legislative office dedicated to producing unbiased fiscal analysis – this fiscal note is meant to provide information for legislative consideration, not to provide policy recommendations.*

Section 3 directs DOC to establish the Family Support Program, outlines the required elements of the Program, states that its implementation is contingent on funds appropriated for its operation, and requires DOC to report annually on the implementation of this bill's requirements to the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Judiciary, and the Senate Committees on Institutions and on Judiciary.

Sections 4-5: Initial Family Support Program implementation and appropriations

Section 4 directs DOC to begin initial implementation of the Family Support Program in the Chittenden Regional and Northern State Correctional Facilities.

Section 5 appropriates \$383,579 from the General Fund to DOC for this purpose. \$115,424 is appropriated for implementation at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility and \$268,155 is appropriated for implementation at the Northern State Correctional Facility.

ⁱ *The full fiscal note history is available on the fiscal tab of the bill page on the General Assembly website and can be pulled up through a bill number search on the JFO page.*