

1                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to faith and character-based prisons;  
 3           providing legislative intent; authorizing the expansion of  
 4           faith-based programs at correctional institutions;  
 5           authorizing character-based programs at correctional  
 6           institutions; mandating expansion and evaluation of faith  
 7           and character-based programs at certain correctional  
 8           institutions; providing an effective date.

9  
 10   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

11  
 12           Section 1.   Section 944.803, Florida Statutes, is amended  
 13   to read.—

14           944.803   Faith and character-based institutions and Faith-  
 15   ~~based~~ programs for inmates.—

16           (1)   The Legislature finds and declares that faith and  
 17   character-based correctional institutions and facilities offered  
 18   in state and private correctional settings have the public  
 19   safety mission and the potential to facilitate inmate  
 20   institutional adjustment, help inmates assume personal  
 21   responsibility, and substantially reduce recidivism. With a firm  
 22   constitutional foundation, faith and character-based  
 23   institutions allow any inmate, secular or religious, to make him  
 24   or herself into a better person. Through the initial step of  
 25   volunteering to reside in a faith and character-based  
 26   institution, an increasing number of inmates are taking their  
 27   first step towards personal responsibility and self-improvement.  
 28   ~~The Legislature finds and declares that faith-based programs~~  
 29   ~~offered in state and private correctional institutions and~~

30 ~~facilities have the potential to facilitate inmate institutional~~  
31 ~~adjustment, help inmates assume personal responsibility, and~~  
32 ~~reduce recidivism.~~

33 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that the  
34 Department of Corrections and the private vendors operating  
35 private correctional facilities shall continuously:

36 (a) Measure recidivism rates for inmates who have  
37 participated in faith and character-based institutions and  
38 ~~religious~~ programs;

39 (b) Increase the number of volunteers who minister to  
40 inmates from various faith-based institutions in the community;

41 (c) Encourage additional community volunteers and strong  
42 community partnerships with community colleges, universities,  
43 and other significant community institutions to further the  
44 mission of faith and character-based correctional institutions  
45 and programs.

46 (d)-(e) Develop community linkages with various religious,  
47 educational, business and community churches, synagogues,  
48 ~~mosques, and other faith-based~~ institutions to assist inmates in  
49 their release back into the community; and

50 (e)-(d) Fund through the use of annual appropriations, in  
51 department facilities, and through inmate welfare trust funds  
52 pursuant to s. 945.215, in private facilities, an adequate  
53 number of chaplains and support staff to operate faith-based  
54 programs in correctional institutions;

55 (f) Fund through the use of annual appropriations the  
56 department staff and contracts required to further the public  
57 safety mission of faith and character-based correctional  
58 institutions and programs. A portion of the savings created

59 through the reduced recidivism rate of participants in faith and  
60 character-based institutions and programs should be used to help  
61 transition ex-offenders back into the community.

62 (3) The department must have at least six new programs  
63 fully operational. These six programs shall be similar to and in  
64 addition to the current faith-based pilot program. The six new  
65 programs shall be a joint effort with the department and faith-  
66 based service groups within the community. The department shall  
67 ensure that an inmate's faith orientation, or lack thereof, will  
68 not be considered in determining admission to a faith-based  
69 program and that the program does not attempt to convert an  
70 inmate toward a particular faith or religious preference. The  
71 programs shall operate 24 hours a day within the existing  
72 correctional facilities. The programs must emphasize the  
73 importance of personal responsibility, meaningful work,  
74 education, substance abuse treatment, and peer support.  
75 Participation in the faith-based dormitory program shall be  
76 voluntary. However, at least 80 percent of the inmates  
77 participating in this program must be within 36 months of  
78 release. Assignment to these programs shall be based on  
79 evaluation and the length of time the inmate is projected to be  
80 assigned to that particular institution. In evaluating an inmate  
81 for this program, priority shall be given to inmates who have  
82 shown an indication for substance abuse. A right to substance  
83 abuse program services is not stated, intended, or otherwise  
84 implied by this subsection. The department may not remove an  
85 inmate once assigned to the program except for the purposes of  
86 population management, for inmate conduct that may subject the  
87 inmate to disciplinary confinement or loss of gain-time, for

88 physical or mental health concerns, or for security or safety  
89 concerns. To support the programming component, the department  
90 shall assign a chaplain and a full-time clerical support person  
91 dedicated to each dormitory to implement and monitor the program  
92 and to strengthen volunteer participation and support.

93 (4) The Department of Corrections shall assign chaplains  
94 to community correctional centers authorized pursuant to s.  
95 945.091(1)(b). These chaplains shall strengthen volunteer  
96 participation by recruiting volunteers in the community to  
97 assist inmates in transition, and, if requested by the inmate,  
98 placement in a mentoring program or at a contracted substance  
99 abuse transition housing program. When placing an inmate in a  
100 contracted program, the chaplain shall work with the  
101 institutional transition assistance specialist in an effort to  
102 successfully place the released inmate.

103 (5) The department shall ensure that any faith component  
104 of any program authorized in this chapter is offered on a  
105 voluntary basis and, an offender's faith orientation, or lack  
106 thereof, will not be considered in determining admission to a  
107 faith-based program and that the program does not attempt to  
108 convert an offender toward a particular faith or religious  
109 preference.

110 (6) The department shall ensure that state funds are not  
111 expended for the purpose of furthering religious indoctrination,  
112 but rather, that state funds are expended for purposes of  
113 furthering the secular goals of criminal rehabilitation, the  
114 successful reintegration of offenders into the community, and  
115 the reduction of recidivism.

116 (7) The department must continue to improve and expand the  
117 existing faith and character-based programs at Lawtey  
118 Correctional Institution and Hillsborough Correctional  
119 Institution to the extent possible. The department must expand  
120 the faith and character-based program at Wakulla Correctional  
121 Institution to include the main unit, work camp, and annex.

122 (8) The department shall evaluate the benefits,  
123 implications, and realistic limitations of the faith and  
124 character-based prison model for cost savings, crime reduction,  
125 enhanced professionalism of correctional employees, and  
126 replicate the faith and character-based prison model when  
127 feasible.

128 Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.