

SENATE LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2929

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

The Senate Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2929.

As reported by the committee, this bill requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide for adequate security checkpoints at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women and to make improvements to physical plant deficiencies at the facility.

The bill specifically requires the DOC to develop and implement security protocols for establishing secure checkpoints at every entrance to the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women, including at every motor vehicle security gate. The security protocols are to require each secure checkpoint to incorporate consistent contraband screening of every staff member, visitor, or other person who enters the facility, as well as screening of every inmate who enters or exits the facility. The current lack of consistent contraband control at the facility increases the risk of correctional staff using contraband to control, harass, and abuse inmates.

The bill further requires the DOC to conduct an inventory of structures on the grounds of the facility that are abandoned, dilapidated, obsolete, or otherwise not in use. Structures identified in the survey that pose a threat to the security of the facility or provide an opportunity for sexual assault to occur are to be demolished or secured. Additionally, the DOC is to determine whether use of the existing upholstery warehouse on the grounds of the facility should be continued; if so, unused equipment and inventory in the warehouse that poses a threat to the security of the facility or provides an opportunity for sexual assault is to be cleared. These measures are necessary to prevent supervision lapses and physical plant deficiencies in the facility from presenting opportunities for staff abuse of inmates.

This bill is in response to the April 2020 report published by the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice and the United States Attorney's Office District of New Jersey entitled "Investigation of the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women (Union Township, New Jersey)."