

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 809 (Quirk-Silva) – As Amended April 1, 2025

Policy Committee: Public Safety

Vote: 9 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to report on the amount of space in its facilities that is available for or could reasonably be converted for academic and vocational education.

Each report must include:

- 1) How much space within CDCR facilities is available for academic and vocational education.
- 2) The extent to which the space described in item 1), above, is being used.
- 3) The amount of the deficit or surplus of space described in item 1), above, is available at each prison.
- 4) The amount of space used for other purposes that could reasonably be converted for academic and vocational education.

CDCR must submit its first report to the Legislature by January 1, 2028, and must report annually thereafter.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Costs (General Fund) to CDCR to collect data from each of its facilities and compile the report, possibly in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually ongoing. CDCR anticipates the department will need additional staffing to collect, analyze, and track data across multiple facilities, and to compile the required reports.

Regardless of cost, consistent with Appropriations Committee rules and practice, this bill is eligible for placement on the suspense file because it has the primary purpose of requiring a report.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Prison should be about more than punishment. It should be about rehabilitation and reducing recidivism. Right now, we lack the hard data to make sure our resources are being used effectively. California

spends \$14.5 billion on corrections each year, and the public deserves to know how that money is spent. AB 809 will make sure the California Department of Corrections shows us exactly how much space is being used for education and vocational programs and where we can make improvements.

- 2) **Background.** CDCR is required to report certain operational and fiscal information to the Legislature each year, including information about the number of teacher and vocational instructor positions, and the availability of and enrollment in academic and vocational education programs and substance abuse programs. This bill requires CDCR to collect and report additional information about the amount of space available for academic and vocational education, the amount of that available space that is actually being used, and the amount of space that could be converted for educational use.

In recent years, CDCR has closed full prisons and portions of prison facilities as prison populations have declined. To date, the Legislature has not enacted requirements for use of those closed facilities or mandated the amount of physical space that must be provided for rehabilitative programs, including educational programs, in state prison.

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