
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7186

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM CONCERNING THE USE OF BODY SCANNING MACHINES IN CERTAIN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES AND REQUIRING REPORTS CONCERNING STRIP AND CAVITY SEARCHES IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.

SUMMARY

This bill (1) requires the Department of Correction (DOC) commissioner, by December 31, 2025, to buy at least two body scanner machines for use in a pilot program on inspecting inmates at certain correctional institutions and (2) authorizes up to \$500,000 in state general obligation bonding to buy the machines, install them, and train staff on how to use them. The bonds are subject to standard statutory bond issuance procedures and repayment requirements.

The bill establishes an annual reporting requirement for the commissioner on strip and cavity searches of inmates in correctional facilities. The report must include (1) how many searches occurred in the prior year in each facility; (2) if there were any lawsuits filed about the searches in the year immediately before the report, with the status or outcome of each; and (3) a copy of the current policy for doing these searches, including any training requirements for correctional officers. The first report is due by January 1, 2026, to the Government Oversight and Judiciary committees.

Lastly, the bill requires the DOC commissioner to submit a report by February 15, 2026, to the Government Oversight and Judiciary committees that evaluates current directives and procedures for strip and cavity searches in the state's correctional institutions. The evaluation must compare the directives and procedures to those of other northeastern states and federal policies, based on institution type, and highlight any differences.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the bonding provision is effective July 1, 2025.

BODY SCANNING MACHINE PILOT PROGRAM

The bill requires the DOC commissioner to buy at least two body scanner machines by the end of 2025 and install at least one each at the York Correctional Institution and the John R. Mason Youth Institution in Cheshire. He must also establish a pilot program on using the machines to inspect inmates.

For the pilot program, the bill requires the commissioner to create directives that prioritize using machine scans instead of correctional personnel doing strip or cavity searches when those searches are usually done under existing directives. The commissioner must train personnel on using the machines and collecting data on their use.

The bill requires the commissioner to submit a report on the use of the body scans by February 15, 2027, to the Government Oversight and Judiciary committees. The report must include the following information:

1. how many scans (a) the machines performed in 2026, by month and reason for the scan and (b) discovered contraband, by month;
2. how many strip or cavity searches occurred in 2026, by month;
3. contraband types and material found that year, by the type of search or scan used;
4. use of additional screening after implementing the body scanners, including strip search, placement on a dry cell watch, urinalysis, or medical assessment to confirm there was no contraband; and
5. any recommendations for legislative changes.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Oversight Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/18/2025)