

Government Oversight and Judiciary Committees
January 16, 2026
Testimony of
Angel Quiros, Commissioner
Department of Correction

Good morning Senator Gadkar-Wilcox, Representative Dathan, Senator Sampson and Representative Carney; Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel and Representative Fishbein and members of the Committees.

I am Angel Quiros, Commissioner of the Department of Correction.

I thank you for the opportunity to discuss the findings of the State Auditors of Public Accounts' (APA) audit of the Department of Correction for FY22/FY23.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the important function and work of the Auditors of Public Accounts. The audits that they perform provide a vital service to state agencies by providing agency leadership with critical insights into the workings and performance of their organizations. I, and my executive staff, appreciate the thoroughness of their reviews and the feedback they provide on agency operations.

The timing of this audit coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and Silver Tsunami retirement wave that greatly impacted state employment. Individually, these events would have posed significant challenges; together, they impacted our workforce and our operations significantly. Throughout the pandemic the agency faced a significant strain in staffing shortages due to illness, where for over two months, approximately 1,500 Correction Officers were out daily with Covid-19. These regular staffing shortages, brought on by the pandemic, exacerbated responsibilities, workloads, and standard operating procedures, which contributed to many of the findings cited in this audit.

The Silver Tsunami retirement wave also contributed to this significant disruption in agency operations, specifically on the administrative side. During this period, there was significant turnover from retirements. These shortages, coupled with the loss of significant institutional knowledge and expertise, resulted in the temporary breakdown of various administrative processes.

The Department employs approximately 6,000 individuals in over 190 job classifications. Our workforce is represented by ten bargaining units covered by ten collective bargaining agreements. We operate 13 correctional facilities 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We are responsible for the care and custody of approximately 11,000 inmates. We house them, feed them, clothe them, minister to their physical, emotional, spiritual, medical and psychological needs, and provide them with reentry and rehabilitatory counseling and programming, addiction treatment services, educational services and vocational and employment readiness training. We also supervise 2,951 offenders in the community through five Parole Offices across the state. Suffice it to say, I oversee an extremely complex and dynamic correctional and human services operation with many moving parts, complex systems, mandates, responsibilities and obligations. While we strive to be the best and to conduct our operations error free, we acknowledge that at times errors do occur. That being said, we do not find deficiencies acceptable. Please know that we take all audit findings seriously and work diligently to rectify all identified deficiencies.

With regard to the FY22/FY23 audit, immediately upon receipt of the audit findings, prior to the release of the audit by the APA, the agency reviewed the auditor's findings and began developing and implementing corrective actions. Meetings were held with all members of the agency's leadership, including all Wardens and unit directors to go over in detail the APA's findings and to discuss causes and corrective actions.

The FY22/FY23 audit had 18 findings, 15 of which were repeat findings. The agency agreed with the APA on fifteen of these findings and agreed in part with the APA on three. Many of these findings involved paperwork issues that were partly due to our agency's continued reliance on paper driven processes and partly due to staff turnover and supervisor education issues. Some of these findings were due to the need for our processes to be updated and harmonized with changes to our operating environment and changes to correctional standards, organizational structure and external mandates.

As a result of this audit the agency has reviewed the identified processes and procedures, and has developed and implemented corrective actions to address the audit's findings.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today, and we would be happy to answer your questions.