
JHA Statement on the Recent Infrastructure Assessment of IDOC Facilities

August 3, 2023

Despite the Illinois Department of Corrections' (IDOC's) annual operating budget of well over \$2 billion, the age and physical state of many of the prisons require billions more to address. This is untenable.

An infrastructure assessment of all the secure IDOC facilities was recently made public. The report titled [Facility Master Plan](#) was authored by the consulting group [CGL](#). JHA is dismayed but unsurprised by its findings, which in part address our [repeated call](#) for an independent assessment of living and work conditions in IDOC and our demands that this information be made public.

Major findings of the May 2023 CGL report echo what JHA has continually heard from people in prisons, observed, and [reported on](#). The age and high levels of deferred maintenance evidenced in many of Illinois' prisons result in significant physical plant issues and degradation. IDOC lacks appropriate space to accommodate programming and treatment needs. In assessing all of the secure IDOC facilities, CGL notes the dangers, limitations, and concerns presented by current infrastructure and unaddressed physical plant issues. Moreover, the report highlights staffing concerns which make living and working conditions even worse.

While cost projections to address identified problems are presented, importantly this report also makes clear that there is and will be excess bedspace capacity in IDOC. This means that without question not all of the current prisons are needed now or in the future and that Illinois can and should swiftly act to close those that are most decrepit, unsafe, and inhumane.

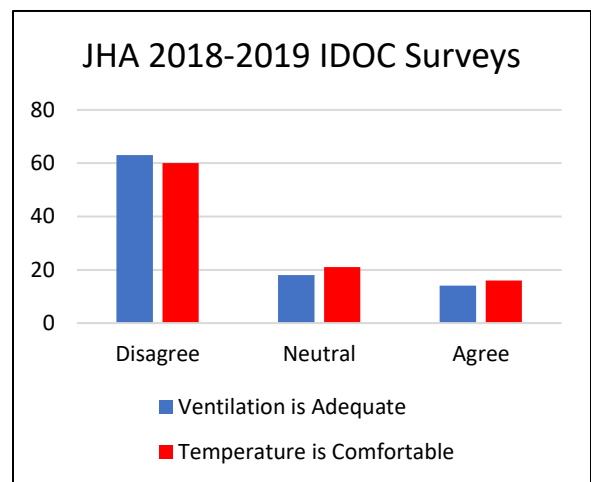
The CGL report estimates a cost of **\$2.5 billion** in repair and replacement expenditures to address the failing prison system infrastructure. The report also states that these deferred maintenance costs can be expected to double every five years. As highlighted in [JHA's 2022 monitoring report on Stateville](#) – just one of IDOC's approximately century-old prisons – before any money is spent on old, decaying facilities, it is critical that thoughtful decisions be made around investing in improvements. We cannot continue to Band-Aid issues at facilities that are beyond fixing and can never be made to be appropriate spaces to treat, rehabilitate, or house people in custody. As also recognized by CGL, most of Illinois'

prisons were built before the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Prison Rape Elimination Act became law, resulting in some being out of compliance with legal safeguards and in clear violation of the civil rights of people who suffer because of this.

Due to my inability to climb stairs I cannot get to the Law Library to find out what the "Time Limit" period is. Request slips

– Individual in custody at Illinois River

Beyond these further legal issues are the horrible conditions people incarcerated in Illinois contend with every day: extreme temperatures and poor ventilation; discolored, odorous, and particle-filled [water](#); water damage that leads to roof and ceiling collapse; mold; and many other issues that continually impact the safety, health, and well-being of the people who live and work in our prisons. These issues are regularly shared in JHA's [reports on communications](#) we receive from inside and in [results from our surveys of people in custody and correctional staff](#).



Note: Chart shows % of 12,780 responses

“The building is ‘roach infested.’ Even the ice machine at dietary is ‘full of roaches.’”

– Individual in custody at East Moline

After a month I started feeling bad with a headache and nausea. I noticed that the water has a gray chemical, rightaway I stopped drinking the water after a week I felt well since then I only use ice to cook my food and drink. Could you please help us to find out what that Gray chemical is and tell everybody that the water is not drinkable.

– Individual in custody at Robinson

The segregation unit down here they lock you behind a still door, you're not allowed a fan in the summer, and the cells are extremely cold in the winter. There are no emergency buttons to push in case of an emergency. Many of us call it a Nazi concentration camp. Summers can get so hot down here, and the inmates in segregation are not allowed cups to drink out of. They have to ~~save~~ ^{save} a milk carton 8oz carton for ice that they may, or may not get.

– Individual in custody at Western Illinois

We aren't providing basic things that we should be. No heat in the kitchen in December?! How am I to teach these people to value themselves and others when the department won't even provide basic human rights to them?

– Staff member at Logan

In addition to the dilapidated state of the facilities, serious understaffing throughout IDOC is making both jobs more difficult and life for the people who are incarcerated more deprived due to increased lockdowns and restricted activity and treatment. It is time to reallocate resources, reduce our reliance on incarceration, and shut down prisons that are not fit for any human being to be in, let alone to foster the rehabilitative climate we want for all of Illinois' citizens.

IM WRITING TO TELL YOU
Guys that inmates mental & physical
health is @ risk here @ Dixon Correctional
Center. Inmates are on lockdowns
everyday due to short staffing
level one lockdowns NO VISITS ~ NO
video visits. NO yard NO gym OR
RECREATION PERIOD INMATES WENT
OUTSIDE ON THANKSGIVING DAY FOR 45 MIN
THAT WAS THE 1ST RECREATION IN 2 MONTHS

– Individual in custody at Dixon

As we look to the future, JHA [again states](#) that Illinois must make sound financial and policy decisions not to invest in failing and decrepit prisons. There are ramifications for facility closures: the local economies of the towns where they are located must be considered, and new sources of employment and revenue generation need to be created to replace prison jobs and related local spending. Supplying jobs should not be why a prison exists. Shoring up economic stability is the job of

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government. Illinois should look to other state agencies, such as [the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity](#), to lead this work.

Based on his review of the recently released CGL report, Senator Robert Peters stated that, "This report is yet another wakeup call on the dual IDOC crises of mass incarceration and mass infrastructure failure. We need to work immediately to turn these recommendations into action. Neither residents or staff of IDOC nor the general public are well-served by a prison system beset with so many problems. Investing in modernizing facilities and closing outdated prisons are part of the solution to create a Department of Corrections that ensures currently incarcerated people have access to what should be basic human needs and rights."

Stakeholders, policymakers, and state leaders have an opportunity to work together to reduce the expense and improve outcomes and the human rights of everyone impacted by our prison system. It is neither the responsibility nor function of the Illinois Department of Corrections to determine and implement new community economic drivers to replace prisons. Illinois cannot continue to house and employ people in prisons that pose a danger to everyone inside of them due to degraded and hazardous conditions; the costs are too high when measured in dollars, morality, and our humanity.

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Contact information:

jvollen@thejha.org, (331) 264-4081

www.thejha.org