

Overview: 2022 Fiscal Year Budget for the Georgia Department of Corrections

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For Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, Gov. Brian Kemp proposed a \$1.12 billion budget for the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC), an agency charged with overseeing the state's prison system. Between 1997 and 2007, Georgia's history of tough-on-crime policies impacted the growth of GDC's population and increased expenditures by \$335.2 million annually.¹

Following Gov. Nathan Deal's criminal justice reform efforts in 2012, a series of major legislative, programmatic and agency changes were implemented. These shifts were designed to reduce the length of incarceration while also expanding probation and parole eligibility. At the end of 2020, GDC reported a prison population totaling 47,033, a 15 percent decline since December 2019, following a modest population decline from 2012 to 2019.² The prison population's substantial decline in 2020 is partially credited to measures taken in response to COVID-19, including increases in early releases coupled with a decline in crime and arrest rates.

While representing only 32.6 percent of Georgia's population, Black Georgians make up over 60 percent of the GDC's prison population. Georgia's legacy of slavery, segregation, Jim Crow, racialized criminalization and punishment through over-policing in communities of color, racially biased punishment within school systems, and historic disinvestments in communities of color have all contributed to the disproportionate representation of the state's Black residents in prison. To reverse these inequities and disparate impacts, budget makers must make racial equity a key goal of budget policy.

As agencies currently operate under Governor Kemp's 4 and 6 percent budget reductions for Amended Fiscal Year 2020 and Fiscal Year 2021 respectively, the GDC has proposed minor spending increases by utilizing federal CARES Act funding to cover expenses related to the COVID pandemic; transferring savings from other GDC program areas to account for greater expenses in health care, substance abuse treatment and inmate housing facilities; utilizing existing funds for 10 percent GDC staff pay increases; and requesting one-time additional state funding to replace vehicles for inmate transportation,

staff use and emergency response.³ Overall, the GDC's budget for FY 2022 totals \$1.1B which reflects an \$82.9M million dollar cut compared to FY 2020 funding.

By the Numbers

Amended 2021 Fiscal Year Budget

Compared to FY 2020's pre-pandemic levels, total spending in the proposal for the Georgia Department of Corrections includes a decrease of \$79.5 million, or approximately 6.6 percent. Changes include:

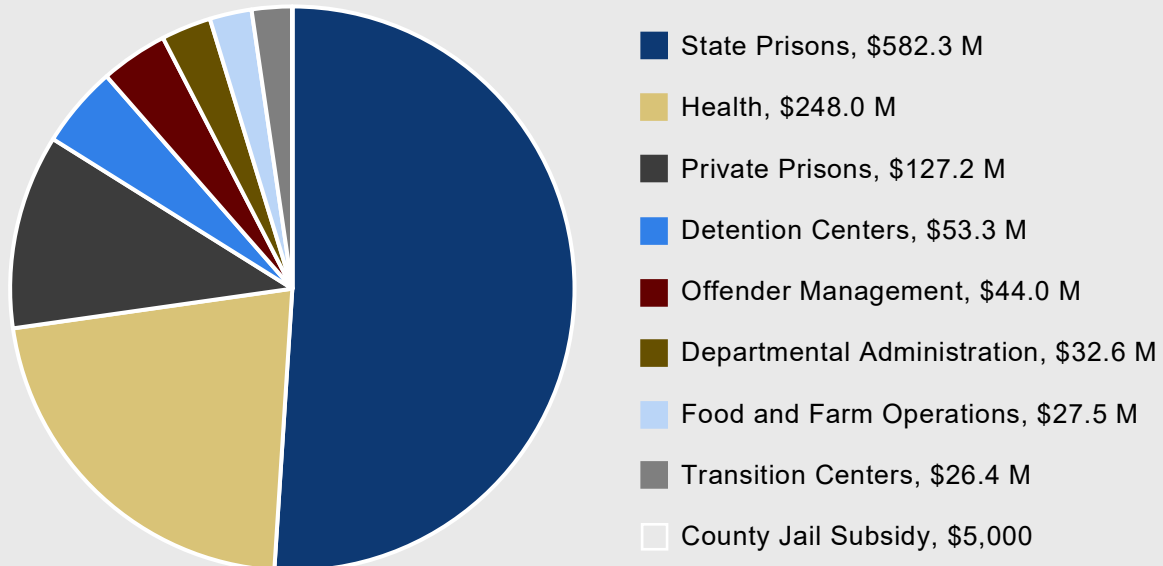
- A \$3,320,000 one-time funding increase to cover the replacement of 43 vehicles for transportation of incarcerated people and 50 vehicles for staff use and emergency response.
- \$4,515,373 transferred from savings due to new timekeeping system implementation, overtime reduction and vacancy freezes to cover greater health contract and residential substance abuse treatment expenses.
- Use of a portion of GDC's current allocation of State Prison funding for a 10 percent increase in correctional officer pay.
- Use of a portion of GDC's current allocation of State Prison funding to open six new dormitories across Bacon Probation Detention Center in Alma, Ga.; Metro Atlanta Re-entry Facility and Smith Transition Center in Claxton, Ga.
- Nearly \$1.4 million in federal funding to cover payments to county facilities for housing people who are incarcerated during the pandemic, and over \$1 million to cover inmate healthcare expenses related to coronavirus.

2022 Fiscal Year Budget

Total spending for the Georgia Department of Corrections in the proposed FY 2022 budget would maintain funding levels that are significantly below pre-pandemic levels, as it is \$82.9 million below FY 2020 spending. Provisions include:

- A \$3,016,262 transfer in savings from the implementation of a new timekeeping system to cover a contract rate increase in residential substance abuse treatment
- Continued use of a portion of GDC's current allocation of State Prison funding for a 10 percent increase in correctional officer pay
- Continued use of a portion of GDC's current allocation of State Prison funding for future facility expansion plans

Majority of GDC Budget Funds State Prisons



Note: County jail subsidies not shown in pie chart as funds are relatively small.

Source: The Governor's Budget Report Amended Fiscal Year 2021 and Fiscal Year 2022.

Implications of the GDC Budget

The FY 2022 budget essentially maintains cuts that were enacted in FY 2021, which were a substantial reduction from FY 2020 pre-pandemic levels. FY 2022 spending proposals are more than \$82 million lower than those of FY 2020. This includes the maintenance of a more than \$5 million cut that was achieved by increasing commissary prices for Georgians who are incarcerated. This will continue to make necessities, including hygiene products, much more difficult to access for those who are incarcerated. It will also place burdens on loved ones who often face financial challenges in supporting incarcerated family members.

Despite deep cuts that would carry over from FY 2020, GDC seeks to transfer over \$3 million in savings from its new timekeeping system to residential substance abuse treatment centers in FY 2022. Incarcerated persons' health concerns have become more acute with the continued rise of COVID-19. Along with proposals made for Amended FY 2021, the legislature will have additional opportunities to address rising COVID and public health needs, as over 34 percent of women, and over 26 percent of men in Georgia facilities had some form of chronic illness in 2020, putting them in a high-risk category for having complications due to COVID-19.⁴

Endnotes

¹ Welsh, R. Z. (2008, January). *Tough on crime and the budget*, 2. https://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/20080111_ToughOnCrimeandTheBudget.pdf

² Georgia Department of Corrections. (2021, February 1). *Inmate statistical profile – all active inmates*. http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/sites/all/themes/gdc/pdf/Profile_all_inmates_2021_01.pdf

³ Angel, S. (2020, February 5). *Overview: Georgia’s 2021 fiscal year budget for Georgia Department of Corrections*. Georgia Budget and Policy Institute. <https://gbpi.org/overview-georgias-2021-fiscal-year-budget-for-department-of-corrections/>

⁴ Georgia Department of Corrections. (2021, February 1). *Inmate statistical profile – all active inmates*. [pg. 46 of 79]. http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/sites/all/themes/gdc/pdf/Profile_all_inmates_2021_01.pdf