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Dear Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability:

On behalf of the Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI), the public policy office of the Catholic bishops of Illinois, and our Prison and Jail Ministry Committee, we offer the following comments on the proposed closures of Stateville Correctional Center and Logan Correctional Center. The CCI Prison and Jail Ministry Committee is comprised of Illinois diocesan representatives who coordinate Catholic prison and jail ministers at correctional facilities across the state. While we do not have a position on the closures of Stateville and Logan, from our experience in ministering to those in these and other correctional facilities in Illinois, we offer these comments if the State does decide to close these facilities and reconstruct them.

As noted in the 2023 consultant report on a Facility Master Plan to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), these facilities are outdated and have numerous infrastructure concerns. Furthermore, the report noted they do not adequately support a rehabilitative environment. Although persons must take responsibility for their actions that harm others, they should also be provided genuine opportunities for rehabilitation, especially as most people who are incarcerated will return to their communities after serving their sentences. Effective programming received while incarcerated can help reduce recidivism. All persons have an inherent, God-given human dignity that does not end when one commits a crime, and how the State moves forward with the corrections system should respect this.

Therefore, if the State does determine that these facilities are to close and be reconstructed, we urge that the facilities are constructed in a way that humanely houses those incarcerated. There should be adequate space for out of cell time for programming as well as consistent access for prison ministers to provide Masses and sacraments, pastoral care, and other religious services. There must also be sufficient funding for programming and reentry services, such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, literacy and educational programs, and employment training and housing assistance for those reentering their communities. We must provide these vital opportunities to heal from trauma, engage in meaningful personal development, and gain new skills.

In addition, if the facilities are closed and those currently in those facilities are relocated to other locations, whether temporarily or permanently, we also call on IDOC to thoughtfully consider the impact of their relocation on their families. The continued presence of their families in the lives of those incarcerated is critical to their rehabilitation while in prison and in their reentry

when they complete their sentences and return to their communities. Any challenges families might encounter with their ability to continue visiting their family members should be considered as decisions are made on their relocation.

Furthermore, as the State looks at the future of these and other correctional facilities in Illinois, we urge the State to also consider opportunities to support alternatives to incarceration for those cases where it is appropriate. We should respond to crime by addressing both the personal choices and underlying root causes that contribute to it. Many who have committed these crimes have needs relating to mental health and substance abuse and have been impacted by various socio-economic factors that could be better addressed in alternative settings other than in correctional facilities. In addition, there are cases where restorative justice programs outside of correctional facilities can address the harm that was caused and restore both the victims and the offender. Restorative justice offers all who are impacted by a crime the opportunity to participate in healing processes of accountability.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments as the State looks to the future of the criminal justice system in Illinois.

+ *Blase J. Cupich*

His Eminence Cardinal Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago

+ *Thomas John Paprocki*

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
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