

MEDICAL PAROLE FOR MEDICALLY FRAIL PRISONERS

Phone: (517) 373-8080
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House Bill 5078 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Al Pscholka

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

House Bill 5079 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Dave Pagel

House Bill 5080 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Dave Pagel

House Bill 5081 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Rob VerHeulen

Committee: Appropriations

Complete to 12/01/15

SUMMARY:

House Bill 5078 would amend the Corrections Code of 1953 to do the following:

- Authorize the Parole Board to grant a medical parole for a prisoner who is determined to be medically frail.
- Define “medically frail” as an individual with a disabling mental disorder, a serious and complex medical condition, or a physical or mental disability that significantly impairs the individual’s ability to perform one or more activities of daily living and renders the individual a minimal threat to society.
- Require that a medical examination by a medical professional employed by the department or an entity the department contracts with to be done in order for a recommendation for a medical parole to be made.
- Require a prisoner who is considered for release to agree to be placed in a medical facility or other location determined to be appropriate by the Parole Board, and to agree to an ongoing release of medical records that are directly relevant to the condition rendering the prisoner medically frail to the prosecutor of the county from which the prisoner was committed. In the case of an incapacitated prisoner, an individual who is legally entitled to agree can agree on behalf of the prisoner.
- Define “medical facility” as a hospital, hospice, nursing home, or other housing accommodation providing medical treatment suitable to a prisoner’s medical or mental condition.
- Require the parolee to remain at the approved location for the length of the parole term, which will not be less than the time necessary to reach the prisoner’s earliest release date.
- Require a prisoner who violates the terms of the parole to be returned to prison unless the prisoner is otherwise eligible for parole.
- Require the Parole Board to monitor the medical condition of a prisoner granted parole.

- Authorize the department to enter into contracts with facilities to facilitate the paroles.
- Require facilities to operate in a manner that ensures safety of the residents of the facility.

The bill is tie-barred to House Bill 5079 and House Bill 5080.

House Bill 5079 is a technical companion bill that would amend the Corrections Code of 1953 to establish that every type of prisoner can be eligible for the special medical parole prior to being parole eligible (e.g., prisoners serving with allowances for good time, prisoners serving with allowances for disciplinary credits, prisoners serving indeterminate sentences with minimums in terms of years, prisoners serving consecutive terms, prisoners serving life sentences, etc.).

The bill is tie-barred to House Bill 5078 and House Bill 5080.

House Bill 5080 would amend the William Van Regenmorter Crime Victim’s Rights Act to do the following:

- Require the Department of Corrections to mail notice to the victim of the victim’s right to submit a written request that the victim be allowed to address the Parole Board and present exhibits or other photographic or documentary evidence to the Parole Board in cases in which a prisoner is being considered for medical parole due to being medically frail.
- Give the victim the right, within 30 days of receiving the notice, to submit a written request that he or she be allowed to address the Parole Board and present exhibits or other photographic or documentary evidence to the Parole Board.
- Require the Parole Board to grant the victim’s request.

The bill is tie-barred to HB 5078 and House Bill 5079.

House Bill 5081 would amend the Michigan Penal Code to make it a misdemeanor for someone to aid or assist a parolee in leaving or attempting to leave a facility in which the parolee has agreed to be placed in and to remain in as a condition of his or her parole. The crime would be punishable by imprisonment for not more than one year, or a fine of not more than \$1,000, or both.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bills would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the state. Savings could be realized as it is assumed that Medicaid would cover healthcare-related costs for “medically frail” prisoners, as that term is defined in HB 5078, who are released on medical parole.

Providing health care to an aging prison population is a large and growing cost for the state. Caring for prisoners inside the prison environment is far more expensive than it is on the outside. Under the 1965 law that created Medicaid, anyone entering a state prison forfeited Medicaid eligibility. But an exception to that general rule opened up in 1997 when the United States Department of Health and Human Services wrote to state Medicaid directors saying prisoners who leave state or

local facilities for care in hospitals or nursing homes can get their bills paid for by Medicaid. Most elderly or disabled prisoners qualify under existing Medicaid rules, as long as they receive care outside of prison facilities. Receiving federally-subsidized long-term care outside of prison walls potentially could save the state millions of dollars in health care costs.

To be eligible for medical release under HB 5078, prisoners must meet a number of requirements related to their medical conditions and to their risks to the public's safety. According to the Department of Corrections, there are roughly 120 prisoners who would be eligible for medical release under the definition of medically frail, but those prisoners have yet to be screened for risk or screened for placement, so it is not guaranteed that all 120 prisoners would be released. Also, there are another 500 to 600 prisoners who are not yet eligible for release under the medically frail criteria, but who could become eligible in the future based on their chronic care needs.

Based on national research, it is estimated that medically frail prisoners cost anywhere from three to five times more than other prisoners in the average prison population. Currently, the average health care cost for prisoners in the average prison population is roughly \$6,714 per prisoner. Assuming the average health care cost for medically frail prisoners is three times more, the average health care cost for medically frail prisoners is roughly \$20,142. Shifting the group of 120 prisoners, who are eligible for medical release under the bills, to an outside nursing home setting, could yield the state a savings of about \$2.4 million annually in healthcare-related costs and up to \$3.0 million when other incidental costs, such as meals and clothing, are included.

Fiscal Analyst: Robin R. Risko

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