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Poll Finds Most Coloradans Oppose Plan to Transfer Idaho Inmates to Privately Owned Colorado Prison; Two-thirds Support Legislation to Prohibit Such Contracts

CCJRC urges Colorado corrections director to reject plan to house 1,000+ Idaho prisoners at Kit Carson Correctional Facility, citing history of riots involving out-of-state inmates

DENVER — Most Coloradans oppose Idaho’s plan to transfer inmates to live in one of Colorado’s closed private prisons, and a strong majority would support the Legislature prohibiting private prisons from housing other states’ inmates, according to results of a [statewide poll](#) released Tuesday.

Last month, Idaho announced it wants to send more than 1,000 of its medium- and high-risk inmates to the Kit Carson Correctional Facility, a privately owned prison on Colorado’s Eastern Plains, for up to five years. Under the proposed contract between the Idaho Department of Corrections and private prison giant CoreCivic, the prison would also be allowed to contract with other states to accept additional inmates from outside Colorado. The plan would need to be approved by the director of the Colorado Department of Corrections, Dean Williams.

A survey of 698 Colorado voters conducted over the weekend by Public Policy Polling found 64% think Williams should oppose the plan. Just one out of five (20%) think he should approve it.

The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition sent Williams a [letter](#) Friday, urging him to reject the plan. It highlighted “a pattern of dangerous situations” that has marked Colorado’s history of allowing private prisons to house inmates from other states, including riots and disturbances that took place in Colorado in 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2010.

“How many times does our state need to experience the dangers and disadvantages associated with the practice of ‘importing/exporting’ inmates?,” read the letter signed by CCJRC Executive Director Christie Donner. “This practice is neither an acceptable nor humane strategy for managing prison populations, and it exposes Colorado to multiple levels of liability and expense that can easily be avoided by not allowing it. Idaho’s inability to effectively manage its prison population should not become Colorado’s problem to solve.”

In response to Idaho's proposed plan, a bill aimed at managing the prison population ([HB20-1019](#)) was amended to require the corrections director to consult with the governor and consider exigent circumstances prior to approving requests for out-of-state inmates to be housed in Colorado private prisons. The bill is expected to be considered in the House Appropriations committee this morning, and if approved, it could be considered on the House floor as soon as tomorrow.

"The amendment does not adequately protect Colorado's interests," said Donner. In her letter to Williams, she lists several stipulations not covered under current law that CCJRC believes should be required before importing Idaho inmates. But she strongly urges him to deny approval of the plan. "The best path forward for Colorado would be to end the practice of importing prisoners from other states altogether."

The PPP survey found just over two-thirds of Colorado voters (68%) would support the state prohibiting private prisons from importing inmates from other states, and nearly three out of five (58%) support ending the use of private prisons altogether. Forty-five percent of voters said they would be more likely to vote for legislators who vote to end the use of private prisons in Colorado, while just 17% said they would be less likely to vote for them.

"Most Coloradans do not support the use of private prisons, and they are even more opposed to the idea of those prisons importing inmates from other states in order to turn a profit," Donner said. "Transferring inmates hundreds or even thousands of miles away from their families and communities adds another layer of challenge to the already difficult processes of rehabilitation and reintegration."

The PPP survey was conducted from January 31-February 2 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.

The full survey results are available at <http://bit.ly/37Zqv0e>.

CCJRC's letter to the Colorado corrections director is available at <http://bit.ly/37TYOWE>.

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The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition is a non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating the overuse of the criminal justice system and advancing community health and safety. For more information, visit <https://www.ccjrc.org>.