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For Immediate Release

Sen. Joyce Waddell [joyce.waddell@ncleg.net]

Sent: Thursday, April 18, 2019 1:30 PM

To: [Steve Johnston](#)

From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 18, 2019

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Prison Safety

Charlotte, NC- One of the most active committees during this session is that of the Prison Safety commission with weekly meetings and hearing multiple reports. As we move forward some major recommendation will be made for safety of interest are:

- mental health
- substance use treatment
- diversion from restrictive housing
- reentry
- staff education and training and inmate suicide

According to the prison system's head of behavioral health services, they will launch a pilot project later this year to have inmates watch other inmates who are considered suicide risks due to the increase in inmate suicides.

The project is still in the planning stages, and officials haven't decided how many offenders will be chosen. The state prison system has been under increased scrutiny in recent years for a number of reasons, including a spike in suicides. It was reported earlier this year that a record twelve inmates in state custody committed suicide in 2018, compared with six in 2017 and seven in 2016, despite the state implementing a suicide prevention plan in 2016. Some benefits discussed for retirement and retention included providing UNC and Community Colleges tuition waivers for children of Correctional Officers, changing the shifts Correctional Officers work, offer recruitment & retention bonuses, and step pay plan for correctional officers.

As the committee continues to meet, strong emphasis will relate to employee retention and recruitment. After the attacks at Bertie and Pasquotank prisons, where five employees were killed in 2017, "It is important that we pass legislation to provide for safety in our prison system and that we continue to recruit and retain excellent prison guards and other personnel" Senator Joyce Waddell stated.

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