

# Justice Reinvestment

## Neighborhood Safety and Opportunity Fund

Reinvesting the cost-savings from criminal justice reforms into  
job training, job creation and job placement



Massachusetts could reinvest hundreds of millions of dollars a year into job-training, job-creation and job-placement programs. California passed a similar initiative on the ballot as Proposition 47 in Nov. 2014. The criminal justice reform provisions in California are projected to save the state upwards of **\$1.25 billion over five years**. That money was then used to form a reinvestment fund.

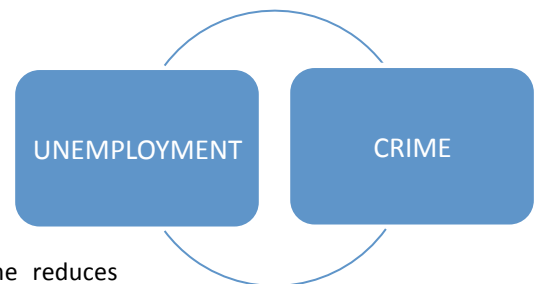
Act to Increase Neighborhood Safety and Opportunity (filed by Sen. Chang-Diaz and Rep. Mary Keefe) would make criminal justice reforms that have proven cost-savings. These cost-savings would be set aside in a trust fund called the “Neighborhood Safety and Opportunity Fund” for governmental and nongovernmental organizations with proven workforce readiness and employment outcomes to bid for.

### A balanced and research-based approach to calculating savings

On an annual basis, the Secretary of Administration & Finance will be responsible for allocating revenue to the Fund based on a balanced analysis, specifically drawing from an Annual Cost Avoidance which will be produced by a third party organization with experience in conducting cost benefit reports for states.

### The cost of long-term unemployment

Long-term unemployment has nearly doubled in the United States since 2009. Long term unemployment has also been connected to crime and violence. A study conducted by the Urban Institute in 2013 says “communities with a higher share of long-term unemployed workers also tend to have higher rates of crime and violence.” Research shows that “a cycle develops whereby involvement in crime reduces subsequent employment prospects which then raise the likelihood of participating in crime” (Machin and Manning 1999). It is important to pair criminal justice reform with an investment in job creation and workforce readiness programs that are proven to be successful. Increased employment will lead to decreased recidivism, and the cycle will be interrupted.



### Target Population

The target population for the Neighborhood Opportunity and Safety Fund are defined as any person who meets two or more of the following characteristics:

- Under 25 years of age
- Victim of Violence
- Veteran
- No High School diploma (and over 18 years old)
- Convicted of a felony
- 6 months unemployed or family income below 250% of federal poverty level
- Live in a census tract where >20% of the population fall below the federal poverty line



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### Successful job-training, job-creation and job-placement models

Massachusetts has many models for successful workforce readiness programs aimed at advancing the economic standing of groups who face high barriers to employment. Through a competitive RFP process funded by revenue calculated from the savings, the Commissioner, with the advice of the Board of Directors (Neighborhood Safety and Opportunity Fund) will provide the critically needed funding to sustain and expand programs that work with people who are exposed to the highest barriers to employment. Ultimately, the Fund will create the pathway for further decreases in recidivism, and further increases in cost savings as a result.

### Commitment to outcomes and performance measurement

To ensure that the fund is used efficiently, the bill includes a provision for performance measurement. IT states that all contracts granted by the Neighborhood Safety and Opportunity Trust Fund will include reporting on outcomes related to the recidivism, employment attainment/retainment, and/or educational attainment, as appropriate, of participants served.

### A Success Story

UTEC in Lowell, MA, one of many success stories across the state, serves young people (ages 16-24) labeled “proven-risk” who are criminally or gang involved. With strong emphasis on internal performance measurement and external evaluations, UTEC focuses its work on the achievement of the following outcomes: **recidivism**, **employment** and **education**. **UTEC has demonstrated a 15% recidivism rate compared to the 65% statewide average.** UTEC is a model for a community-based program worth investing in.

UTEC highlights three critical practices that can serve as a model for other programs to achieve such successful outcomes, while also creating significant cost savings for the state through a reduction in the number of days incarcerated:

- Pre-release planning in partnership with correctional facilities, both state and county levels.
  - On-going case management provided for a minimum of 12 months post-release.
  - Year-round workforce development training/employment opportunities that may include educational offerings.
- UTEC’s model focuses on all youth being employed in the agency’s own social enterprises in the fields of food services, mattress recycling, and woodworking. All youth also spend part of their regular schedule in the classroom, allowing them to also gain their high school equivalency while enrolled.



Pre-release planning in partnership with correctional facilities.



On-going case management provided for a minimum of 12 months.



Year-round workforce development opportunities (that also integrate educational offerings).

