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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/25/06
 LAST UPDATED 1/26/06 HB _____

SPONSOR Martinez

SHORT TITLE County Detention Facility Reform Act SB 419

ANALYST Peery

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY06	FY07		
	\$25,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY06	FY07	FY08	Total Cost	Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
Total		\$308.6	\$308.6	\$617.2	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates HB264

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Attorney General’s Office (AG)
 New Mexico Sentencing Commission (NMSC)
 New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD)
 Association of Counties (AC)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 419 appropriates \$25,000.0 from the general fund to the “County Detention Facility Reform Fund” for expenditure in fiscal year and subsequent years to carry out the provisions of the County Detention Facility Reform Act.

The proposed legislation creates a new “County Detention Facility Reform Fund” in the State

Treasury, to be administered by the Department of Finance Administration (DFA). Money in the fund may not be used by DFA for administration of the fund. Money in the fund is to be used for reimbursing counties for the incarceration of a state prisoner who: has violated his parole and is charged with a parole violation; while on parole is charged with a violation of local, state, tribal, federal or international law; is awaiting transportation and commitment to the Corrections Department following pronouncement of a judgment, sentence or order to confinement; is charged with a violation of his/her probation by the department or by the district court; is sentenced, ordered or removed by the district court to incarceration in a county detention facility; or is incarcerated on the basis of an arrest and hold order or a warrant issued by the Corrections Department. The proposed legislation defines a “state prisoner” as a person charged with or convicted of a violation of state law, with the exception of those individuals convicted of a misdemeanor.

NMCD states the proposed legislation sets the rate of reimbursement at the actual cost per day for housing each prisoner incarcerated in that county’s detention center, but it does not state what the actual cost is, or who will determine the actual cost. The proposed legislation requires DFA to reimburse the counties for the cost of providing ancillary services - such as medical, dental, mental health, vision care, prescription drugs and ambulatory/transportation services - to state prisoners housed in county facilities. The proposed legislation also states that no one county can be reimbursed more than 50 percent of the money in the fund.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$25,000.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund.

This bill creates a new fund and provides for continuing appropriations. The LFC has concerns with including continuing appropriation language in the statutory provisions for newly created funds, as earmarking reduces the ability of the legislature to establish spending priorities.

NMSC reports that the legislature could chose to adopt the definition of “state prisoner” in this proposed legislation or could modify the definition to include fewer or more inmates. The definition will control whether costs continue to be borne by the counties or are passed to the state.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

NMSC reports they conducted a study for the New Mexico Association of Counties that provides a count of individuals held on felony charges in six detention facilities in New Mexico on June 30, 2003 and estimates the annual cost of housing four categories of felony arrestees throughout the state. NMSC updated the cost estimates based on arrestees held on June 30, 2005. The report shows the estimated cost of housing arrestees held on felony charges in county detention facilities is \$25,308,662. This is \$308,662 higher than the appropriation in the proposed legislation.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

NMCD states they had previously suggested that the Local Government Division of DFA administer the fund. NMCD agrees that the fund would be best administered DFA.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

The proposed legislation is a duplicate of House Bill 264.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

NMCD states the proposed legislation's definition of "state prisoner" is extremely broad and unusual. NMCD reports typically, a person would only become a state prisoner if he was imprisoned or sentenced to the custody of the department. NMCD reports the definition in the bill includes individuals, such as those placed on probation, that are simply not state prisoners and that would often never be incarcerated in a state prison. NMCD states under this broad definition of state prisoner, the department's exposure to liability could be increased. NMCD gives the following example, a state prisoner in a county facility is attacked by other inmates and seriously injured or killed there, the family of the injured or murdered inmate may very well attempt to sue the Corrections Department and claim that it is the department's fault that the inmate was injured or murdered. NMCD suggests the proposed legislation should be amended to remove the definition of state prisoner, to add language indicating it only deals with payment issues, and to clarify it does not make the State of New Mexico or the Corrections Department responsible for the care and safekeeping of inmates housed in various county facilities.

ALTERNATIVES

The New Mexico Association of Counties reports in the 2004 legislative session, the Legislature gave counties increased taxing authority of a new 1/16th of countywide general purpose authority, and expanded 1/8th countywide for maintaining and constructing detention facilities as well as extraditing and transporting state prisoners. The New Mexico Association of Counties reports 18 counties have enacted this new authority and others are considering an increase in their local taxes to meet the escalating cost of prisoners.

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