

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/vera-helps-delaware-craft-landmark-justice-reinvestment-legislation>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

On August 8, Suzi Agha, Christine Leonard, and I attended the signing ceremony for Delaware [Senate Bill 226](#), landmark justice reinvestment legislation aimed at improving public safety and ensuring corrections dollars are spent wisely. We were particularly happy to mark this important occasion in the company of Democratic and Republican legislators, law enforcement and corrections agency leadership, officials from the judicial branch, and community advocates from across the state.

It was a long road to get to this point, as many of those in the room could attest. Community advocates and legislators alike have been working for years to bring justice reinvestment to Delaware. Governor Jack Markell listened and directed his Criminal Justice Council Executive Director Drew Fennell to apply to the [Justice Reinvestment Initiative \(JRI\) program](#), funded by the U.S. Department of Justices Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA).

Vera's role began in spring 2011 when staff from Vera's [Center on Sentencing and Corrections](#) assessed the state's JRI application for BJA. Upon acceptance into the program, Governor Markell convened the Delaware Justice Reinvestment Task Force to study the state's criminal justice system. Assisted by Vera, the task force analyzed data and reviewed corrections and community supervision policies and practices to develop a comprehensive package of reforms. The legislature translated these recommendations into Senate Bill 226, which passed in the Delaware Senate on June 12 and the Delaware House of Representatives on June 21 with strong bipartisan support in both houses.

While Delaware and Vera have much to celebrate with the passage of Senate Bill 226, much work remains to be done. Among other tasks, the state must implement an objective pretrial risk assessment, provide judges with information about offenders risks and needs at sentencing, implement earned time credits for program completion and compliance with conditions of supervision, target inmates and offenders needs with appropriate programming, assess and support community capacity for treatment and programming, and analyze recidivism rates on a regular basis. We are pleased to be able to continue the work of justice reinvestment with the ongoing support of our federal partners at BJA as Delaware begins to implement these measures.

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