

HOUSE BUDGET REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, PUBLIC SAFETY, & JUDICIARY (H)

Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the 2026 Regular Session

January 20, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The second meeting of the House Budget Review Subcommittee on Justice, Public Safety, and Judiciary of the House Standing Committee on Appropriations and Revenue was held on January 20, 2026, at 10:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Stephanie Dietz, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Stephanie Dietz, Chair; Representatives Adam Bowling, Josh Bray, and Jennifer Decker.

Guests: Rebecca Norton, Budget Director, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet; Randy White, Director, Department of Juvenile Justice; Kristen Porter, Division of Reentry; Alan Watt, Special Assistant to the Director of Adult Institutions, Capital Construction Management Branch; Deputy Commissioner Brian Bowling and Kevin Rader, Director, Administrative Division, Department of Criminal Justice Training; Brandon Marshall, Director of Radio Systems; Lt. Colonel Jeremy Hamm, Office of Administrative Services, Kentucky State Police; Damon L. Preston, Public Advocate, Department of Public Advocacy (DPA); and Melanie Lowe, Deputy Public Advocate, DPA.

LRC Staff: Zachary Ireland, Perry Papka, Spring Emerson, and Jim Thornton.

Approval of Minutes

Due to the lack of a quorum, approval of the January 13, 2026 minutes was deferred until the next meeting.

Justice and Public Safety

Rebecca Norton, Budget Director, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, gave an overview of the priority needs of the Cabinet for fiscal years 2026-2028.

In response to Chair Dietz, Director Norton said the proposed female detention centers would be in Jefferson and Fayette Counties. All female inmates are currently being housed, but facilities are having to adapt to the lack of space.

In response to Representative Bray, Commissioner Porter said the new reentry facility would provide an immersive experience versus the staggered approach being used now. Deputy Commissioners Bowling and Director Rader said the Department of Criminal Justice Training (DCJT) has graduated two classes and will graduate a third on March 1, 2026. He added that the DCJT communicate with EKU on a weekly basis.

In response to Representative Bray, Director Marshal stated the Servs Radio System installation and upgrade will not be finished in the current budget cycle.

In response to Representative Bowling, Lt. Colonel Hamm stated the negotiations for Posts 7 and 10 remain ongoing.

Department of Public Advocacy

Public Advocates Preston and Lowe provided information on the pressures facing the Department of Public Advocacy (DPA) from the significant loss of trained attorneys to other states due to the lack of parity in salaries, the difficulty in recruitment, and the lack of DPA offices in many of the Judicial Circuit Courts around the state. They further listed reasons why the proposed statutory change would aid the DPA in accomplishing its core responsibilities.

In response to Chair Dietz, Attorney Preston said the cost of training a new attorney would be provided.

In response to Representative Decker, Attorneys Preston and Lowe said there are no federal grants available which cover core responsibilities, such as representation in court.

Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled for January 27, 2026. There being no further business before the subcommittee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:07.