

Editorial

UTEC has earned oversight of youth transition program

The administration of Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll recently announced the awarding of nearly \$6.8 million in state and federal funding to support programs designed to reduce recidivism, address substance-use disorder and deliver transition-into-society services for adults ages 18 to 25 leaving prison.

And it's a mission that the governor has entrusted to arguably the state's premier young-adult social service/rehabilitation organization — Lowell-based UTEC.

Thanks to the Fiscal 2026 Emerging Adult Reentry Initiative, the Office of Grants and Research distributed \$5.95 million to six nonprofit organizations delivering coordinated pre- and post-release services in partnership with county sheriff's departments and the Massachusetts Department of Correction.

An additional \$525,000 was awarded to a technical assistance provider — UTEC, through its Training Center for Excellence — to support implementation and continuous improvement.

Massachusetts sheriff's departments also received a combined \$310,000 through the federally funded Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners Grant Program, which provides resources to corrections agencies to deliver services to treat substance-use disorder and reduce future offenses driven by addiction.

"Massachusetts is a national leader on reducing recidivism because we invest in evidence-based programs that work. By funding and supporting these proven programs for emerging adults, we strengthen public safety in communities across Massachusetts," said Healey.

"We are proud to work with community organizations, the Department of Corrections, and local sheriff's departments, to focus on practical supports for emerging adults that reduce the risk of reoffending, promote stability, and expand opportunity," said Public Safety and Security Secretary Gina Kwon.

"The services funded through these programs are tailored to address underlying factors that contribute to criminal acts, reducing the risk that participants will reoffend in the future," said Office of Grants and Research Executive Director Kevin Stanton.

The Emerging Adult Reentry Initiative provides funds to community-based nonprofits that work closely with corrections agencies. Funded organizations use the grants to provide pre- and post-release reentry services to those between the ages of 18 to 25.

The grant program also funds a technical assistance provider — in this case UTEC — that delivers technical, strategic and research support to ensure the funded programs meet their goals.

The RSAT Grant Program allows corrections agencies to deliver programming to address substance use disorders. The evidence-based programs are designed to reduce the likelihood that program participants will use substances and commit future offenses after returning to the community.

Formerly known as the United Teen Equality Center, UTEC has expanded beyond its original mission by instituting many new programs, including a successful mattress recycling business.

Since taking over that operation for the city of Lowell,

UTEC's reach has expanded to Lawrence and Haverhill; it now processes about 35,000 mattresses annually.

While instituting other job opportunities, including food services and wood working, UTEC also offers programs to help former young adult offenders navigate the headwinds of re-entry into society.

In February 2024, UTEC was selected to receive funding from the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for its "Re-Entry Transitional Housing Initiative" program.

It was designed to serve 25 young people exiting correction facilities, up to three of whom may serve in a mentorship role to provide peer support.

In May of that year, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities Secretary Ed Augustus and Security Secretary Terrence Reidy joined UTEC CEO Gregg Croteau, and several young adults from Lowell, Lawrence and Haverhill to discuss UTEC's transitional housing program.

"Stable housing is a critical component to reducing recidivism among our young adults," said Augustus at that occasion. "UTEC is providing the support for young adults who have no other options, and it allows individuals to focus on getting back on track without the fear of homelessness."

Added Reidy: "I am grateful to Secretary Augustus, the HLC team, UTEC, and our many community partners for their significant contributions to improving outcomes and breaking down barriers to successful reentry."

UTEC also claimed one piece of that \$5.9 million in Emerging Adult Reentry Initiative funding pie.

In addition to the \$525,000 awarded UTEC for its oversight role, it received \$1.2 million for its collaboration with the Middlesex and Essex sheriff departments.

A technical assistance provider partners with community reentry programs to support their work by imparting pre- and post-release services to adults returning to society.

UTEC's Training Center for Excellence's Emerging Adult Reentry program integrates community-based programs with the most effective prison-based practices to better serve young adults in their collective care.

It's UTEC's view that correctional facilities should create specific units for emerging adults, based on juvenile detention models that emphasize a therapeutic approach and an orientation toward reentry.

That's accomplished by offering comprehensive programming to support positive development through education, including vocational training, and enhanced counseling.

Reentry programs are part of the Healey Administration's broader strategy to reduce recidivism, improve outcomes and promote public safety statewide.

A report published by the DOC last year showed decidedly lower reoffending rates among individuals who took part in vocational, educational and treatment programs compared to those who did not complete such programs.

UTEC has demonstrated its ability to help teens escape the grip of gang violence. And now one of its diversified programs wants to ensure that young adults who've paid their debt to society remain on a productive path.

Cartoonist's take



ICE

FROM PAGE 8

anyone they think might be undocumented, based on factors like ethnic appearance, language, and where you happen to be hanging out when they stop you. Once they've stopped you, they can claim to have probable cause that you're undocumented (for example, because you don't have proof of citizenship on you). Then the officers can simply arrest you, without a warrant.

The total package amounts to a sweeping authorization for ICE agents to roam the streets,

grab just about anyone they want, arrest and detain them.

It's not only that such proceedings are un-American. It's that they are plainly unlawful under the legal regime that is supposed to apply. The warrant requirement for an ICE arrest, established by statute, is meant to function as a protection against exactly the kind of massive, non-specific sweeps ICE is now performing.

Similarly, the requirement of a judicial warrant before entering a home is a foundational safeguard of individual liberty.

The good news about ICE's attempts to get around the law is that they will come before the courts. The courts should

affirm that the statute means what it says: "likely to escape" means that ICE may not arrest a person without a warrant unless they are a flight risk. Judicial interpretation of federal law is a cornerstone of preserving the rule of law itself. ICE's actions are terrifying, and meant to be, but the law remains one of the tools that can be used to resist a descent into a police state.

Noah Feldman is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. A professor of law at Harvard University, he is author, most recently, of "To Be a Jew Today: A New Guide to God, Israel, and the Jewish People."



Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel on Jan. 30 denounced President Donald Trump's attempt to "asphyxiate" the communist island's economy under a "false pretext."

Cuba

FROM PAGE 8

moneymakers, is down by 70% since 2018. Foreign visitors simply don't want to travel to Cuba if it means their U.S. visas could get tied up in bureaucratic purgatory. The same goes for companies that would ordinarily view Cuba as a lucrative investment opportunity; why risk getting fined, prosecuted by the U.S. Justice Department or shut out of the much larger U.S. market when you could just play it safe?

The only thing worse than Cuba's economy is its energy outlook. During the last quarter century of Chavismo in Venezuela, Cubans could depend on Caracas for a steady diet of crude oil at a highly subsidized rate. But with Maduro now sitting in a New York jailhouse and his former vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, trying to please the Trump administration with oil concessions, Venezuelan crude is no longer flowing to the island. Alternatives are few and far between. Russia's crude exports to Cuba are sporadic, and Mexico, which has sent oil to Cuba on a humanitarian basis since the 1970s, is now getting pressured by the Trump administration to cut shipments. Cuba could run out of fuel in the next 15 to 20 days, which means that

everything from garbage collection and hospital services to electricity generation could be disrupted.

To tighten the screws further, Trump signed an executive order last week instituting a tariff regime on any country that sells or supplies crude oil to Cuba. This presents another delicate balancing act for Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, who needs to remain in Trump's good graces while at the same time shielding herself from being seen as throwing Cuba under the bus. Failing to do the former could upend U.S.-Mexico relations on any number of fronts; failing to do the latter will get her into trouble with her party's vocal far-left faction, which sees support for Cuba as an extension of anti-imperialism.

Trump, meanwhile, hasn't given us a clue about what he aims to accomplish in Cuba. "It doesn't have to be a humanitarian crisis," Trump said over the weekend. "I think they (Cuba) would come to us and want to make a deal."

But what kind of deal is Trump looking for? According to U.S. law, Washington seeks to accomplish a long list of idealistic goals in Cuba: the release of all political prisoners; the legalization of political activity; free and fair elections under international supervision; an independent judiciary; guaranteeing personal freedoms and

rights like free speech and a free press; and a new constitution. Needless to say, the Cuban authorities aren't interested in doing any of this, particularly if it dilutes their political power or threatens the regime's durability. And while Trump may not busy himself with democracy promotion, it's hard to believe the Cubans will be as amenable to U.S. subjugation as their former Venezuelan allies have been so far.

As I wrote in a recent paper, normalizing the U.S.-Cuba relationship would be the most effective and least costly policy proposal on the table. Cuba isn't a real national security threat to the United States anyway, can't possibly compete with U.S. primacy in the Western Hemisphere and at times has been willing to cooperate with Washington on issues ranging from migration to counter-narcotics. Regime change on the island has also fallen woefully short since 1959, when Castro chased the U.S.-backed dictator off the island.

Yet to expect Trump to embrace this recommendation is borderline delusional. And the Cuban people, suffering under extreme deprivation, will pay the ultimate price.

Daniel DePetris is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune.