

NEWS RELEASE AND STATEMENT ON LEGISLATION
AUTHORIZING REGIONAL DETENTION CENTERS

February 14, 1968

The Agnew administration today introduced legislation to enable Maryland's counties to construct and operate regional prisons as a supplement to or replacement for county jails.

The bill authorizes any county or Baltimore City to establish such regional detention centers by entering into contractual agreements with other counties, or the State, or both.

The purpose of the legislation is to enable and encourage the operation of improved correctional services and facilities at the local level.

Provisions are made for State financial assistance up to 50 percent of the construction costs and to pay 50 percent of the costs for specialized rehabilitation. The State presently is required to pay half the cost of improvements or repairs to jails if mandated by the State jail inspection program.

Under terms of the new legislation, once a county or counties agree on a regional detention project, they may apply to the Commissioner of Correction for State financial assistance. Broad discretionary powers for the development of criteria and standards are vested in the Commissioner rather than specified in the bill.

Projects approved by the Commissioner would be eligible for 50 percent State aid for construction and 50 percent of the salaries of any rehabilitation, training and educational personnel hired to conduct an approved rehabilitation program. Regular prison employees such as guards, cooks and administrative officials would not be eligible for matching State support. The State's emphasis would be on adding to and improving the quality of professional training personnel.

Final approval for all regional projects would be vested in the State Board of Public Works.

The measure also specifies that the State could house prisoners in such regional facilities under contract with the subdivisions. Judges would be empowered to sentence offenders with limited terms (up to 18 months) directly to regional detention centers.

"One of the main purposes of this measure is to upgrade rehabilitation and training opportunities for short-term offenders, while relieving congestion in our present State prison system," Governor Agnew said.