

**House File 2588 - Introduced**

HOUSE FILE 2588  
BY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND  
WORKFORCE

(SUCCESSOR TO HF 2129)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act establishing a water and wastewater operator  
2 apprenticeship and work release pilot program for inmates,  
3 and making appropriations.  
4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 904.914 Water and wastewater  
2 operator apprenticeship and work release pilot program.

3 1. The department, in coordination with the Iowa department  
4 of natural resources and Iowa workforce development, shall  
5 establish an apprenticeship and work release pilot program for  
6 inmates to train and work as certified water and wastewater  
7 operators and to meet all of the following goals:

8 a. Address the shortage of qualified water and wastewater  
9 operators in the state.

10 b. Provide inmates with meaningful vocational training, work  
11 experience, and a pathway to post-release employment.

12 c. Promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism.

13 2. An inmate is eligible to participate in the program if  
14 the inmate meets all of the following conditions:

15 a. The inmate is serving a sentence for a nonviolent  
16 offense.

17 b. The inmate is within twenty-four months of the inmate's  
18 earliest possible release date.

19 c. The inmate has participated and demonstrated good  
20 behavior in prison programming.

21 d. The inmate meets the minimum qualifications established  
22 by the department of natural resources and Iowa workforce  
23 development for apprentices in water and wastewater operations.

24 e. The inmate is approved by the department and the board of  
25 parole for work release.

26 3. The program shall include all of the following:

27 a. Classroom instruction aligned with the department of  
28 natural resources certified water and wastewater operator  
29 curriculum.

30 b. On-the-job training with participating municipalities or  
31 utilities through registered apprenticeships.

32 c. Supervised work release placements to perform operator  
33 duties in a real-world setting.

34 d. Assistance with certification exams and job placement  
35 upon release.

1 4. The department of natural resources shall ensure  
2 that training and experience obtained through participation  
3 in the program qualifies toward the requirements for state  
4 certification as a water or wastewater operator.

5 5. The department shall collaborate with the following:

6 a. Municipalities and rural water utilities.

7 b. Community colleges and certified apprenticeship sponsors.

8 c. The department of natural resources and Iowa workforce  
9 development for technical guidance and support.

10 d. Employers willing to hire former inmates upon release.

11 6. The department shall submit an annual report to the  
12 general assembly by January 15, 2027, and by January 15  
13 each year thereafter, that includes inmate participation,  
14 certification rates, employment outcomes, and recidivism  
15 statistics for program participants.

16 7. Employers participating in the program in good  
17 faith shall be afforded the same liability protections  
18 as those currently existing for work release programs and  
19 apprenticeships.

20 8. This section is repealed January 16, 2029.

21 Sec. 2. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS — WATER AND WASTEWATER  
22 OPERATOR APPRENTICESHIP AND WORK RELEASE PILOT PROGRAM —  
23 APPROPRIATION. There is appropriated from the general fund of  
24 the state to the department of corrections for the fiscal year  
25 beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027, the following  
26 amount, or so much thereof as is necessary, to be used for the  
27 purposes designated:

28 For the purpose of implementing and administering the water  
29 and wastewater operator apprenticeship and work release pilot  
30 program established in section 904.914, as enacted by this Act:

31 ..... \$ 500,000

32 EXPLANATION

33 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
34 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

35 This bill establishes a water and wastewater operator

1 apprenticeship and work release pilot program for inmates.

2 The bill provides that the department of corrections  
3 (department), in coordination with the Iowa department of  
4 natural resources (DNR) and Iowa workforce development (IWD),  
5 shall establish an apprenticeship and work release pilot  
6 program for inmates to train and work as certified water and  
7 wastewater operators and to address the shortage of qualified  
8 water and wastewater operators in the state; provide inmates  
9 with meaningful vocational training, work experience, and a  
10 pathway to post-release employment; and promote rehabilitation  
11 and reduce recidivism.

12 The bill provides that an inmate is eligible to participate  
13 in the program if the inmate: is serving a sentence for  
14 a nonviolent offense; is within 24 months of the inmate's  
15 earliest possible release date; has participated and  
16 demonstrated good behavior in prison programming; meets  
17 the minimum qualifications established by DNR and IWD for  
18 apprentices in water and wastewater operations; and is approved  
19 by the department and the board of parole for work release.

20 The bill provides that the program will include classroom  
21 instruction, on-the-job training, supervised work release  
22 placements, and assistance with certification exams and job  
23 placement. DNR must ensure that training and experience  
24 obtained through participation in the program qualifies  
25 toward the requirements for state certification as a water or  
26 wastewater operator. The department shall collaborate with  
27 municipalities and rural water utilities, community colleges  
28 and certified apprenticeship sponsors, DNR, IWD, and employers  
29 willing to hire former inmates upon release.

30 The bill requires the department to submit an annual report  
31 to the general assembly by January 15, 2027, and by January  
32 15 each year thereafter, that includes inmate participation,  
33 certification rates, employment outcomes, and recidivism  
34 statistics for program participants.

35 The bill appropriates \$500,000 from the general fund of the

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1 state to the department of corrections, for FY 2026-2027, to  
2 implement and administer the program.

3 The pilot program is repealed January 16, 2029.