



# OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

*Suzanne M. Bump*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

February 13, 2019

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## **Audit Leads to Improvements and Financial Accountability at Bristol County Sheriff's Office**

**BOSTON** — The Bristol County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) needed to make improvements to its financial management and reporting processes, according to an audit by State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump that found several deficiencies in these areas. Bump's audit, which examines the period of July 1, 2015 through December 31, 2017, makes recommendations to ensure the BCSO is following state law and procedures in this realm.

In the audit, Bump calls on the BCSO to ensure reimbursements for housing federal immigration detainees are properly remitted and reported to the state. In addition, she calls on the office to establish a process to ensure the Commonwealth is fairly reimbursed by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for services the office provides. She also encourages BCSO to submit total inmate cost analysis reports and to improve documentation of credit card expenditures to ensure they are for legitimate business purposes. In its response, BCSO indicated it would take action on these recommendations.

Bump found the BCSO did not properly transfer \$348,922 in reimbursements from ICE back to the Office of the State Treasurer or account for them in the state's accounting system. The audit also found the office had not renegotiated its contract for services it provides to ICE since 2010, did not submit reports on the cost for care and custody of inmates to appropriate state agencies and legislative committees in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, and did not properly document credit card spending. As an independent state agency, the BCSO contracts with ICE in coordination to hold federal immigration detainees.

Other concerns, expressed to the Auditor's office by local groups concerned about conditions at the jail and house of correction, were reviewed, but not subject to full audit procedures. Questions regarding healthcare worker and inmate ratios, facility overcrowding, and suicide rates, were dealt with by audit staff observations, reviews of a recent national accreditation report, and comparisons with other sheriff's operations. This review showed that BCSO facilities were operating below capacity, and its ratio of healthcare personnel to inmates and suicide rates were similar to others in other county facilities.

"We took seriously community concerns that were relayed to us," according to Bump, "but did not find anomalies in the Sheriff's operations. As to questions regarding the Sheriff's activity on policy matters, those are matters best left to the voters of Bristol County."



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The Bristol County Sheriff's Office houses approximately 1500 men and women in facilities in North Dartmouth and New Bedford. The BCSO is responsible for the care and custody of individuals who are sentenced or awaiting trial and detainees who are in deportation proceedings with ICE. The office receives an annual operating budget from the state of approximately \$42 million.

## **About the Office of the State Auditor**

The Office of the State Auditor conducts performance audits of state government's programs, departments, agencies, authorities, contracts, and vendors. With its reports, the OSA issues recommendations to improve accountability, efficiency, and transparency. The OSA has identified approximately \$1.3 billion in unallowable, questionable, or potentially fraudulent spending and saving opportunities for the Commonwealth since 2011. Last year, auditees report implementation of 92 percent of the OSA's audit recommendations. The office [received the Einhorn-Gary Award](#) for its success furthering government accountability and the highest possible rating on its [peer review](#), which was conducted by the National State Auditor's Association.

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