SOUTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Legislative Audit Council
Independence, Reliability, Integrity
LAC

June 9, 2008

RECEIVED
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DIRECTOR

Mr. Jon Ozmint, Director
SC Department of Corrections
4444 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29210

Dear Mr. Ozmint:

I have reviewed your comments to our questionnaire. As noted in my May 6 letter, the Legislative Audit Council is conducting this survey in conjunction with the University of South Carolina's (USC's) Institute for Public Service and Policy Research, which has conducted similar surveys of other state agencies. The following is offered in response to your comments.

- While this specific instrument has never been used with South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) or other agencies, there was an effort to incorporate items from previous surveys in order to establish some benchmarks for comparison. A number of the items are from a survey of employees of the South Carolina Department of Transportation done by USC and others are adapted from the Federal Human Capital Survey administered by the Federal Office of Personnel Management.

- In an effort to get a general assessment of conditions we want to achieve a high response rate from those selected to participate. One concern is that potential respondents will not participate or will not provide honest responses if they are concerned about confidentiality. Given this, no information was included on the questionnaire that would allow them to be tracked, and the amount of background information that was requested was limited to gender, race, years employed at SCDC, and whether they were in a security or non-security position. More specific information, such as work setting, duties, work location and the like, was not requested because of concerns over confidentiality and because the purpose of this survey was not to assess specific locations within SCDC but to provide a general assessment of employee perceptions of the Department.

- Terms that are used in this questionnaire, such as "high level of respect," "top management," and "most qualified," are general terms that can typically be understood without additional definitions or clarification, particularly since the purpose of this survey is to describe perceptions of conditions at the SCDC.

- The use of multiple items to measure constructs is a generally accepted means to achieve more reliable measurement. Results that rely on a single measure are more likely to produce biased or unreliable results than those based on multi-item measures.

- The terms used in this questionnaire are not designed to invite disproportionate participation from any group of employees. The questions can be considered as either positive or negative. For example, the item on coercion reads, "Arbitrary action, personal favoritism, and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated." More importantly, all 50 of the closed-ended items provide an equal opportunity to provide either a positive or a negative response, and none of the response choices are either encouraged or discouraged.

- Several revisions have been made to the survey to address some of your other concerns and I have included a copy of the revised survey with the changes marked.

Finally, I am concerned that your views on this survey could have a negative effect on the response rate and, therefore, our ability to complete the audit. In particular, your statements that you "…prefer to have no involvement…including any CRT message to our employees…" and that you "…do not intend to participate with this survey…." In conducting our reviews, we count on the cooperation of state agencies. We do not consider our requests associated with the survey to be burdensome. Therefore, once the survey is final, we expect you to assist us in the survey by sending out the pre-notification e-mail as well as with any other issues that may arise. If you have any additional comments, please provide them by Friday, June 13. We expect to mail the survey late next week and would need the pre-notification e-mail sent no later than Tuesday, June 17. Thank you.

Sincerely,

George L. Schroeder
Director

/mrw

cc: Sen. Mike Fair
Mr. Scott English
Dr. Robert Oldendick