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MDOC IS CLOSING THIRD COMMUNITY WORK CENTER FRIDAY

JACKSON – The Mississippi Department of Corrections is closing its third community work center in less than a year.

Inadequate staffing has become too critical to continue operating the Yazoo County Community Work Center, Commissioner Marshall Fisher said. All eight staff members and 35 inmates from the Yazoo City location will have been relocated when the center closes Friday.

“Until we are able to provide livable wages for all employees, we likely will continue to have staffing issues agency wide,” Fisher said today. “I have asked the Legislature for help in addressing this public safety issue, and I thank the House for approving House Bill 283 and House Bill 1498.”

House Bill 283 allows Fisher to realign employees’ pay. House Bill 1498 grants the department another year of exemption from Mississippi State Personnel Board rules, regulations and procedures, effective July 1, 2016. Both bills are now pending in the Senate.

With Yazoo’s closure, the department will be operating 14 community work centers. Two more centers with chronic staff shortages are expected to close in a matter of weeks. They are Bolivar County Community Work Center in Rosedale and Jackson County Community Work Center in Pascagoula. Work centers in Alcorn and Jefferson counties have already closed.

Fisher said municipalities and counties should no longer heavily rely on inmate labor in the face of a dwindling eligible inmate population. However, MDOC is willing to work with eligible county jails to provide a Joint State County Work (JSCW) program, he said. For example, the department and Yazoo County Sheriff Jacob Sheriff have discussed starting a JSCW program.

Media note: For more information about community work centers, go to <http://www.mdoc.ms.gov/Community-Corrections/Pages/Community-Work-Centers.aspx>

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