

The Pennsylvania
PRISON SOCIETY
S I N C E 1 7 8 7

May 24, 2017

The Honorable Ron Marsico
House Judiciary Chairman
315J Main Capitol Building
PO Box 202105
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Joseph Petrarca
Minority House Judiciary Chairman
220 Irvis Office Building
PO Box 202055
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: SB 522 PN875 and SB 523 PN867 Creating the Department of Criminal Justice

Dear Chairman Marsico, Minority Chairman Petrarca, and PA House Judiciary Members:

The Pennsylvania Prison Society supports SB522 and SB523 providing for the merger of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Pennsylvania Board of Probation & Parole (PBPP) into the Department of Criminal Justice.

The Prison Society endorses this proposal which will decrease administrative inefficiencies while increasing support and planning for individuals leaving prison. As of 2015, Pennsylvania was one of only six states where the two functions were not combined.

The proposed merger will lead to a seamless treatment process. Currently, DOC has an array of mental health and substance abuse services. On the other hand, PBPP agents have very limited resources at their disposal. In some cases, lack of services or disagreements about treatment needs have resulted in those with addiction issues “slipping through the cracks” once on parole, only to return to DOC custody in a repetitive cycle. The proposed merger rectifies this problem by giving PBPP staff access to the same services currently only available to DOC, and by encouraging coordination of treatment planning and staff training.

The proposed merger will reduce recidivism. It is estimated that the merger will result in a five percent reduction in recidivism from greater attention to and resources for individuals returning to the community from incarceration.

The propose merger is cost-effective. The current two-department structure involves redundancy of responsibilities. Significant overtime cost savings can be generated from this merger. The

proposed merger is forecasted to save the Commonwealth \$10.6 million in FY 2017-18, the first full year of operation and \$32.4 million in year five.

Since 1787 the Pennsylvania Prison Society has promoted humane conditions in Pennsylvania's prisons and advocated for sensible and effective criminal justice policies grounded in research. We support SB522 and SB523, for greater community safety through an enhanced and efficient criminal justice system.

Please contact me at the Prison Society at 215-564-4775 x 115 or at eshubik@prisonsociety.org if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CSA', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Claire Shubik-Richards,
Executive Director