

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 859

PRINTER NO. 976

AMOUNT

\$10.3 Million Cost Savings
First Full Year of Implementation

FUND

General Fund
State Offender Supervision Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

May 29, 2015

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Greenleaf

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL

Senate Bill 859 amends Title 61 (Prisons and Parole) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, consolidating the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole into a single state agency titled the "Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation."

Specifically, this legislation does the following:

- Changes the name of the State Board of Probation and Parole to the "Pennsylvania Parole Board" (Board) and establishes it as a departmental administrative board within the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (Department) for the purpose of granting and revoking paroles to certain offenders within this Commonwealth;
- Allows for members of the Board to attend meetings via videoconferencing or similar virtual presence technology;
- Removes the power of appointment of the secretary of the Board from the members of the Board and places it with the Department;
- Provides that legal counsel for the Board shall be appointed in accordance with the Commonwealth Attorney's Act;
- Removes the power "to supervise and make pre-sentence investigations and reports" from the Board;
- Removes the duties of compiling statistical information about offenders on probation or parole and establishing statewide standards for supervision or qualifications of probation personnel from the Board and places those responsibilities with the Department;
- Adds a "parole violator center" to the list of facilities where a technical parole violator can be detained;
- Defines "parole violator center" as an "area within the secure perimeter or on the grounds of a State correctional institution or contracted county jail that has been designated to house offenders charged with or determined by the Board to have committed a technical parole violation;

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- Removes the duties of supervising and training of parole agents from the Board and places those responsibilities with the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation; and
- Provides for the powers and duties of the Department in the supervision of offenders and agents.

This act shall take effect in one year.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Enactment of this legislation is expected to result in future cost savings and increased efficiencies in the operations of our state correctional institutions and parole services. Additionally, an expected reduction in recidivism may result with the expediting of prisoners' releases from prison and the providing of appropriate supervision.

According to a "Cost Savings from Combining Corrections and Parole" survey by the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA), no exact data is available on the cost savings realized by states that have combined the two agencies. Most states' corrections and parole mergers took place too long ago to determine any cost savings that may have been realized.

According to the Governor's Office of the Budget, there are no cost savings expected during the current fiscal year, but there is an expected cost savings of approximately \$10.3 million during the first full year of implementation. These cost savings would be a result of streamlining administrative offices, eliminating duplicative services, modernizing the use of technology and revising the method of managing Technical Parole Violators (TPVs).