



Senate of Pennsylvania

Senator Larry Farnese

1st Senatorial District

MEMO

Date: *December 7, 2010*
To: *All Senators*
From: *Senator Larry Farnese*
Subject: *Co-sponsorship Memo – Philadelphia Community Court Surcharge*

In the upcoming session, I will be introducing legislation that would provide a much-needed funding source for the Philadelphia Community Court without placing an additional burden on state taxpayers.

The Philadelphia Community Court is a problem-solving court that merges criminal justice and social service agencies for a comprehensive response to quality-of-life crimes.

The Court emphasizes community service sentences and behavioral treatment programs, rather than jail time, for low-level offenses and helps to cut repeat offenses by addressing the defendants' underlying social or medical service needs.

The Court has jurisdiction over offenses that include theft from auto, retail theft, minor drug possession, vandalism, and prostitution. Defendants receive expedited hearings, no later than the next business day after arrest. On-site social service staff provides professional screenings, which are provided to the Judge prior to sentencing.

My legislation would amend Title 42, Section 916 to allow for the imposition of a \$25 surcharge upon defendants who plead or are found guilty of an offense in a problem-solving court in the First Judicial District

(Philadelphia Community Court). This would be collected in the same manner as other court costs and used by the county to fund the problem-solving court and its related treatment services.

The Philadelphia Community Court is a high-volume court, taking on as many as 45 new cases per day. The processing of such a large cache of cases has created a financial burden on the Court. Allowing them the authority to impose such a surcharge would go far in alleviating that burden.

Please join me in co-sponsoring this legislation by contacting Brandie Pifer at 717-787-5662 or at bpifer@pasenate.com. If you require clarification or have any questions regarding this legislation, please contact Sally Keaveney at skeaveney@pasenate.com.