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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG
MEMORANDUM

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TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative W. Curtis Thomas

DATE: January 31, 2012

SUBJECT: Co-sponsorship of Legislation – Interagency Council on Inmate Reentry

Nationwide, more than 700,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons annually. More than 95% will be released to the community. A large number of those incarcerated come from - and return to - a relatively small number of already disadvantaged neighborhoods. Two in three released prisoners will be rearrested within 3 years. Half of those released will be incarcerated for new crimes or technical violations.

No longer can the Commonwealth's responsibility for offenders end when they are released from one of our prisons. Today, we must be deeply invested in the chapter that follows incarceration – reentry and efforts to keep ex-offenders from committing new crimes. Reentry also presents a major opportunity to improve public safety, public health, the workforce, education, family and our communities.

Therefore, I intend to introduce legislation to establish the **Pennsylvania Interagency Council on Inmate Reentry**. Specifically, the council would be charged with examining the following:

- The adverse consequences of mandatory sentencing in the state.
- The cost of incarceration of inmates.
- Ways to strengthen the educational and vocational skills of those incarcerated.
- Ways to improve the process of inmate reentry to the community.
- Ways to establish and implement effective reentry plans prior to release.

I am confident that through the establishment of the council, we will greatly assist those returning from prison and jail to become productive citizens and thereby make our communities safer by reducing recidivism and victimization and save taxpayers' dollars by lowering the direct and indirect costs associated with incarceration.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Mary Gingrich at (717)783-0250 or via e-mail at mgingrich@pahouse.net.