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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

MEMORANDUM

To: All Members of the House of Representatives

From: Representative Ronald Waters

Date: March 20, 2012

Subject: Co-sponsorship: Drug Law Reform

In the near future, I intend to introduce legislation which would amend Titles 5 (Athletics and Sports), 18 (Crimes and Offenses), 23 (Domestic Relations), 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure), 61 (Prisons and Parole) and 75 (Vehicles) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes to fundamentally restructure the drug laws in the Commonwealth. The fiscal and societal cost of the current system's ineffectiveness necessitates a change in the way we approach penalizing non-violent drug offenders.

It costs the Commonwealth approximately \$35,000 per year, per inmate. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, the inmate population has increased 25% in recent years, from 40,965 in 2004 to nearly 52,000 in 2011. Drug offenses accounted for 17% of total admissions, which equates to nearly 9,000 offenders. New population projections show that this population will inflate by at least another 5,000 inmates by June of 2016. Given these staggering numbers, I believe the Commonwealth needs to re-examine the way that we sentence drug offenders, because our current system is failing both taxpayers and inmates alike.

My legislation would repeal sections of The Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act and re-write controlled substance possession, distribution and manufacturing penalties in Title 18. The bill would also implement legislative suggestions from the Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission in Title 42. The amendments to Titles 5, 23, 61 and 75 are all editorial in nature (i.e. all sections that reference the Drug Act as it relates to possession, distribution, and drug trafficking or manufacturing of controlled substances are replaced with the section reference of the newly created Chapter 58 (Controlled Substances) in Title 18).

I ask you to join me in co-sponsoring this important legislation. Please contact Nilda Jenkins at 772-6955 or via e-mail at njenkins@pahouse.net.

Thank you.