

TESTIMONY OF LT. FRANCIS T. HEALY,
SPECIAL ADVISOR TO POLICE COMMISSIONER RAMSEY
BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
REGARDING HOUSE BILL 2517
AMENDING THE PENNSYLVANIA PAWN BROKERS ACT
AUGUST 11, 2010

Good morning Chairman Caltagirone, Representative Brown, and members of the House Judiciary Committee, my name is Lt. Healy and I am here to testify on behalf of Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey regarding House Bill 2517. First, before I begin, I would like to extend the Commissioner's gratitude for allowing the Philadelphia Police Department to voice its opinion on this important legislation.

A core tenant in the Mission of the Philadelphia Police Department is to fight crime and the fear of crime. The proposed amendments offered in this Bill are designed to further the ability of law enforcement agencies across the Commonwealth to better combat property crimes and those criminals that utilize pawn shops to profit from their acts. With that being said, let me state that Philadelphia Police Department fully supports the amendments to the Pennsylvania Pawn Broker's Act as proposed in this Bill.

Specifically, House Bill 2517 adds a new section to section 16 for *Hold Orders and Related Procedures*. This allows an appropriate law enforcement official, with probable cause to believe that property in the possession of a pawnbroker has been misappropriated, to issue to the pawnbroker a written hold order on the property for up to ninety (90) days. Once such an order is issued to a pawnbroker, the pawnbroker is prohibited from releasing or disposing the property subject to the hold order except pursuant to a court order, written release from the law enforcement official or after the expiration of the hold order.

Due to the complexity of documenting stolen property, investigating property crimes and effectively prosecuting such crimes, the ability to retain evidence, which is crucial in these cases, once they enter the pawnshops is a great benefit for law enforcement. Time is of the essence in these investigations. Pawnshops across the Commonwealth are used to move this type of property through unwitting pawnbrokers. Regrettably, for law enforcement, by the time most investigations begin in earnest, much of the stolen property has already been lost. The Bill under review today can make a dramatic difference. Once a pawnbroker is properly notified, allowing law enforcement officers ninety (90) days to hold suspected stolen property will allow law enforcement officers to conduct more in-depth investigations and allow for the preservation of more evidence. This combination will lead to better investigations and prosecutions. For these reasons the Philadelphia Police Department supports this Bill.

This concludes my testimony. Again, thank you for allowing the Philadelphia Police Department to voice its opinion of this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

Thank you.