

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA

MAIN BUILDING
ROOM 140

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2018
10 A.M.

BUDGET HEARING

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
BOARD OF PROBATION & PAROLE

BEFORE :

HONORABLE STANLEY SAYLOR, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE KAREN BOBACK
HONORABLE SHERYL DELOZIER
HONORABLE GEORGE DUNBAR
HONORABLE GARTH EVERETT
HONORABLE KEITH GREINER
HONORABLE DOYLE HEFFLEY
HONORABLE SUE HELM
HONORABLE LEE JAMES
HONORABLE WARREN KAMPF
HONORABLE FRED KELLER
HONORABLE JASON ORTITAY
HONORABLE MIKE PEIFER
HONORABLE MARGUERITE QUINN
HONORABLE BRAD ROAE
HONORABLE JAMIE SANTORA
HONORABLE CURT SONNEY
HONORABLE JOSEPH MARKOSEK, MINORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE KEVIN BOYLE
HONORABLE TIM BRIGGS
HONORABLE DONNA BULLOCK
HONORABLE MARIA DONATUCCI
HONORABLE MARTY FLYNN
HONORABLE PATTY KIM
HONORABLE STEPHEN KINSEY
HONORABLE LEANNE KRUEGER-BRANEKY
HONORABLE MIKE O'BRIEN
HONORABLE MARK ROZZI
HONORABLE PETER SCHWEYER

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ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:
HONORABLE CRIS DUSH
HONORABLE JUDY WARD
HONORABLE TODD STEPHENS
HONORABLE FRANK RYAN
HONORABLE DARYL METCALFE
HONORABLE MATT BRADFORD

COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:
DAVID DONLEY, MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
RITCHIE LaFAVER, MAJORITY DEPUTY EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR
MIRIAM FOX, MINORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TARA TREES, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

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Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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I N D E X

TESTIFIERS

* * *

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
JOHN WETZEL SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS.....	5
LEO DUNN CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF PROBATION & PAROLE.....	16

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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(See submitted written testimony and handouts online.)

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Summer A. Miller, Court Reporter
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 * * *

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I'll call the
4 hearing to order.5 Before we begin today, I'd like to extend the
6 committee's sincere condolences to the passing of Sergeant
7 Mark Baserman. Our thoughts and prayers are with the
8 Baserman family and all of the employees at the Department
9 of Corrections.10 And with that, I'd like to ask everybody to
11 stand for a moment of silence.

12 (Moment of silence.)

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you.

14 Commissioner, if you and the chairman would,
15 rise and raise your right hand.16
17 JOHN WETZEL AND LEO DUNN, called as
18 witnesses, being duly sworn, testified as follows:19
20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you.21 With that, we will move to the first
22 questioner, and that is Representative Brad Roae.23 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Thank you, Mr.
24 Chairman.

25 And thank you, gentlemen, for being here

1 today to offer testimony.

2 About a year ago, the Department of
3 Corrections entered into a contract with the state of
4 Vermont to house some of the prisoners from Vermont they
5 didn't have room for. And it's my understanding that the
6 contract was for \$72 a day, which works out to about \$26,000
7 a year.

8 When I look at your budget, when you look at
9 that line item in the budget for state correctional
10 institutions and you divide that by the number of prisoners,
11 it's about \$41,000. If you add in the medical cost line
12 item, the education line item, and the general government
13 operations line item, you're up to about \$48,000 a year per
14 inmate, but you're only charging Vermont \$26,000 a year.

15 So could you explain a little bit about how
16 that came to be?

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: So when you take -- as you
18 did, you take our overall budget and divide it by the number
19 of inmates, that's how you get an average yearly cost. But
20 when we have 10 less inmates, we don't save that \$48,000
21 times 10.

22 There's a marginal cost and the marginal cost
23 is about \$15 a day. So when we put inmates in empty beds
24 that are already staffed, the actual cost to us is about \$15
25 a day.

1 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: So yeah, you're saying
2 you have certain fixed costs that are the same, regardless
3 of what your population is, and you can add those extra
4 inmates without adding very much in other costs?

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct.

6 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay. And then --

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: Because staffing, I mean,
8 staffing is 80 percent of our budget. So when we don't add
9 staff, it doesn't add costs.

10 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: So with more prisoners,
11 you don't have to have more guards or more doctors or more
12 teachers or anything like that?

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: No. That's why it makes
14 sense for us to do that because we didn't have to increase
15 staffing or anything.

16 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay.

17 Another question I have is, I was looking at
18 a study from the Vera Institute, and the average state
19 spends about \$33,000 a year per inmate. You know,
20 Pennsylvania, we're at about 48,000 a year, or 41,000, you
21 know, depending on how you calculate it.

22 What's the difference between other states,
23 you know, why they can do it for 33,000 and we're more like
24 48,000?

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, I think a couple of

1 things. One, unions versus nonunion states, there's a big
2 mix. So if you're looking for a more analogous --
3 northeast, most of the northeast states are unionized and
4 our costs would be analogous to theirs.

5 I think the second thing, and probably more
6 importantly is staffing levels. I think if you look at a
7 lot of systems, you'll see much lower staffing levels and
8 you also, not coincidentally, see a higher level of
9 assaults.

10 So I think that the two big things are union
11 versus nonunion states, and staffing levels.

12 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay.

13 And then my final question has to do with
14 smoking. I know some counties have smoke-free prisons, some
15 still allow it.

16 What is the state system doing?

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Actually, when we open the
18 new SCI Phoenix, it's going to be tobacco-free. We're
19 looking at that for the system, potentially over the next
20 year. But we're going to do --

21 The move from Graterford to Phoenix is a big
22 operation for us. We're going to do that first, try to
23 learn lessons from that, and then explore it for the rest of
24 the system.

25 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: How many prisons

1 currently allow smoking, about?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: All but two -- three, all
3 but three, so 22.

4 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay. Because I think
5 a lot of us do have concerns with the associated higher
6 health care costs --

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

8 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: -- for smokers and the
9 fire hazard from having, you know, inmates with matches or
10 lighters or whatever they're allowed to have. So I'm glad
11 to see that is being looked at.

12 All right. Well, thank you for your
13 testimony. I appreciate it.

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you, sir.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
16 Markosek.

17 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Thank you,
18 Chairman.

19 And good morning, gentlemen.

20 Question -- a couple of questions I have.
21 One is, last year, the budget request, there was a decrease
22 because of the closing of SCI Pittsburgh. And obviously,
23 that is a done deal now and that has occurred.

24 Can you give us the status on that? Because
25 I think part of, if I recall, the agreement there was the

1 employees would be offered other positions. And how many
2 took retirement or what percentage are still working in the
3 system? Can you give us just a status on, you know, the
4 closing, the move, and what your budget situation is
5 relative to that closing?

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. So the prison was
7 closed last June, so we got a full year of savings out of
8 that. All of the staff were offered positions. I can get
9 you a percentage that retired, unless someone has it behind
10 me. But everyone was offered a position.

11 And then, they have what's called secondary
12 recall, so some didn't get their first choice. And we're
13 through, about 75 percent are at their first place. I will
14 get you the number of people who retired.

15 Right now the facility is primarily being
16 used as a movie set. Mindhunter if you're a Netflix fan.
17 They're actually doing a casting call for anybody who's
18 looking to do that. Maybe in retirement, you...

19 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: I'll do the
20 opposite of Ronald Reagan. I'm in politics now, I'm going
21 to go into acting.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: There you go.

23 I wouldn't have thought to compare you to
24 Ronald Reagan, but...

25 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Well, he's a

1 moderate.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Fair point.

3 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Relative to
4 today anyway.

5 Another area of questioning I had was
6 relative to the mental health situation. And you've been in
7 my office numerous times, and over the last few years, that
8 has been a big issue. And I know there was a court case
9 that surrounded that and you had to upgrade certain things.

10 Can you give us a status report now on the
11 Department of Corrections and how they're treating mental
12 health now, budget-wise how that's all affected you, and you
13 know, just a general status now of where we are with that?
14 Because I know that was a major issue for you and it became
15 a major issue for me.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

17 So what the chairman is referring to is we
18 got sued by the Disability Rights Network over our treatment
19 of individuals with mental illness. I believe it was 2013.

20 As a direct result of that, we had to make
21 some significant changes, most of which is increase staff
22 and mental health staff. It was a total increase of 319
23 staff. We allocated -- you all allocated 40 million
24 additional dollars to manage it.

25 I think the good news is that we're doing a

1 much better job of treating individuals with mental health
2 illness. I think the bad news is that the numbers keep
3 growing. It's now 29 percent of our population. It is, I
4 believe, 70 percent of our female population is on the
5 mental health roster. It's a very challenging population to
6 manage. And from a reentry standpoint, it's really critical
7 to be able to plug them back into mental health services.

8 So it's a really challenging aspect and we've
9 been working with the Department of Human Services and
10 Secretary Miller. It really -- you know, our big push has
11 been to divert and create an infrastructure and a community
12 where people can divert.

13 I will mention that we undertook -- the state
14 partnered with the County Commissioners Association of
15 Pennsylvania to encourage counties to do the Stepping Up
16 Initiative, stepping up for mental health, getting, asking
17 counties to do a better job of quantifying individuals with
18 mental illness, and partnering with them to provide better
19 services at the county level.

20 But it's a huge challenge. I mean, if you
21 would have said 30 years ago that we'd have 12,000
22 individuals with mental illness in prison, no one would have
23 believed that, but that's our numbers.

24 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Okay. Thank
25 you.

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
3 Jamie Santora.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: Thank you for being
5 here this morning.

6 Secretary, back, just following up on
7 Representative Roae's questions, just one quick follow-up.

8 Where did we get the number of 26,000 and
9 change for Vermont?

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: I guess our fiscal people.
11 We got together and figured out what the actual, what the
12 marginal cost was and then what a competitive -- we were
13 competing with other places to get the business, if you
14 will. So we wanted to have a competitive -- and we made it
15 analogous to what they were paying in Michigan. So that's
16 how we --

17 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: And is Michigan
18 union or nonunion?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: It was at a private
20 facility in Michigan.

21 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: Okay.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: So it wasn't the state
23 Department of Corrections.

24 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: So we beat out --
25 even with our union, we were able to beat them out for the

1 contract?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Because of empty beds that
3 were already staffed, so our cost was minimal.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: Okay.

5 Switching to, last year, the Governor was
6 supporting a merger of your two departments. And there was
7 a lot of concern from members on both sides of the aisle
8 about this merger. In fact, it never got through. However,
9 the Governor decided to use an Executive Memorandum of
10 Understanding to be able to, I guess, quasi merge your
11 departments.

12 Why did we seek the merger in the first place
13 through legislation if the Governor was able to do this
14 anyway?

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, I think the
16 preference would have been to have legislation, but given
17 the fiscal challenges and the operational improvements and
18 the Governor's ability to do, to consolidate like functions
19 via executive order, we moved forward after we exhausted the
20 legislative route through the budget process. The Governor
21 chose to go in this direction.

22 I believe that happened late October. It
23 could have been early November.

24 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: So you don't believe
25 the legislature, the general assembly, has a role in

1 determining this?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think it would be
3 preferential, but I think the Governor has the ability to
4 consolidate like functions. Governors have done that in
5 other ways at other times. And so, I think this is, this is
6 certainly plan B, and plan A would still, legislation would
7 be preferable, but this accomplished the same thing, saved
8 the administrative costs, gave us the ability to increase
9 parole field supervision staff, which is critical to public
10 safety.

11 Yeah, I don't think this is the best way to
12 accomplish it, but it is a way to accomplish the
13 consolidation.

14 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: So then this could
15 happen in other departments and just, executive order and
16 merge things. That's what I'm hearing, is you don't need
17 the general assembly to do these types of activities.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, I don't know in
19 other -- I don't know anything about other agencies. I know
20 that there's a provision that allows for the Governor to
21 consolidate like functions, and under that provision, that's
22 how the consolidation was achieved.

23 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: Is there any
24 anything different through the Memorandum of Understanding
25 than what would have happened if there was a full merger

1 through legislative activity?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, a couple of little
3 things, like changing names, like -- technically all the
4 field supervision staff is now supervised under one entity.
5 They still remain employees of the board.

6 But the functionally, day-to-day, not a huge
7 difference.

8 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: So there are
9 savings, though, associated with that merger?

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes, administrative
11 savings. You'll notice in our GGO, which represents the
12 administrative costs, is actually down. And that's -- we
13 projected 10 million in the first year, the first full year
14 of the savings. We're still working through the merger
15 process, so we're anticipating a full budget year this year.
16 So 10 million is the number we're projecting. We're very
17 comfortable with that number.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: And what about the
19 efficiencies?

20 I mean, I'm looking at your overall budget,
21 which I believe is up?

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, it's up --

23 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: But your GGO is
24 down. It's not offsetting.

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, no, 109 million is

1 the increase. And when you have 16,000 staff and just the
2 contractual increases -- our operational expenses are
3 actually down over the past five years, but those personnel
4 expenses -- I mean, overall personnel expenses would go up,
5 just doing nothing, I believe in the 200 million range. So
6 we were able to reduce that spend, just you're talking
7 salary increases, pension costs, benefits. Our yearly
8 rollover cost is substantial.

9 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: All right. I'm
10 sorry. I have to rush because my yellow light is on.

11 How do you plan to maintain autonomy between
12 the Board of Probation and Parole and the Office of Victim
13 Advocate?

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, they're still
15 both -- I'll let the chairman address it. They're still
16 both independent. That's nothing to do with
17 decision-making. It has strictly to do with supervision.

18 CHAIRMAN DUNN: Yeah --

19 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: You can answer. I
20 just can't ask anything else.

21 CHAIRMAN DUNN: Okay. Lucky me on that one.

22 What you're looking at is the board is still
23 making totally independent decisions on every person that
24 comes before us.

25 And as always, the Office of Victim Advocate,

1 which, of course, is under even separate law with support
2 provided through the board and the department that they are
3 still doing their role separately. We do not interfere and
4 even prior to the -- with the Office of Victim Advocate,
5 even prior to the MOU. I did not tell, as chairman, tell
6 the Office of Victim Advocate or the victim advocate how to
7 perform their role. They do that on their own and we
8 interact very well with their office, and the other two,
9 I'll say sub-entity commission boards that work within our
10 facility.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: And I apologize, I'm
12 just going to throw it out there, is there a hierarchy
13 between you two?

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: No.

15 CHAIRMAN DUNN: We're the same.

16 REPRESENTATIVE SANTORA: Thank you.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I also want to
18 recognize -- we're been joined by some members who are not
19 on the Appropriations Committee, but are here to hear the
20 testimony. Representative Ward and Representative Dush are
21 here. Thank you for being here.

22 We'll move on to our next questioner,
23 Representative Krueger-Braneky.

24 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chairman.

1 Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for joining us here
2 today.

3 So I know that in reading the prep materials
4 that one of the costs that's driving your budget is inmate
5 medical care. Can you tell us how much of that is for
6 inmates with substance abuse disorder?

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: The medical care, that
8 wouldn't come under that. That comes under our bureau
9 treatment services in general.

10 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Okay.

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: We are expanding our
12 medication-assisted treatment. But in general about
13 75 percent of our folks come in with a substance use
14 disorder.

15 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: So it's a
16 separate line item in your budget, though? So when we --

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. It's part of our
18 overall SCI operations.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Okay.

20 And specifically, do you have any idea how
21 much you're spending on folks who are suffering from opioid
22 addiction?

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: Between 38 and 40 million.

24 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Has that
25 increased?

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. We've seen the
2 number of individuals coming in with an opioid addiction
3 double over the past 10 years.

4 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Okay.

5 So I'm from Delaware County, where this is
6 absolutely an epidemic, and there's a mom who's an
7 incredible advocate who lost her own daughter to an
8 overdose. And she keeps bringing to my attention the fact
9 that in our private prison, that folks with substance abuse
10 disorder, and specifically those who are struggling with
11 opioid addiction, are not necessarily getting the treatment
12 that they need.

13 So can you tell us, how are we helping folks,
14 when they're in our system, with their addiction issues?
15 And then how are we helping them when they're preparing to
16 exit the system, knowing that nine out of ten people will
17 eventually go back into the community?

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. I think the one
19 thing I want to clarify, though, is when you refer to your
20 local, it's a county jail.

21 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Yes, it is.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: We call them county
23 prisons in Pennsylvania, but it's a county jail.

24 And the challenges there are the length of
25 stay. The folks generally come in, and the average length

1 of stay is 60 days at a county jail in Pennsylvania.

2 But if you look at -- probably 60 to 70
3 percent leave within two weeks. So it's very challenging to
4 provide treatment in that context.

5 We don't have that challenge. So we have
6 inpatient drug and alcohol at all of our facilities. We
7 also have Vivitrol available at all 25 facilities as part of
8 a reentry plan.

9 I think what you're going to see this year is
10 we're planning six opioid specific therapeutic communities
11 throughout our system. We're also expanding our use of
12 medication-assisted treatment, specifically targeting people
13 who come in with less than a year to serve, so primarily
14 parole violators and what we call short mends or people who
15 have less than a year to serve, to keep them on
16 medication-assisted treatment during their entire
17 incarceration to increase the likelihood that they stay in
18 drug treatment as they get out.

19 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Okay.

20 And my next question for you, I want to talk
21 a little bit about mandatory minimums. I know when you were
22 before us last year, you said that your research shows that
23 they just don't work and that they don't do anything to
24 reduce the recidivism rate. They don't keep our communities
25 safer.

1 And the Supreme Court overturned the
2 mandatory minimum sentences in 2015, and yet, that hasn't
3 stopped my colleagues from introducing new bill after new
4 bill for new mandatory minimums.

5 There was a point last year where we voted on
6 a Wednesday on a new mandatory minimum, and then we voted
7 the very next day to cut the Correction budget, which you
8 know, from a financial perspective and a logic perspective,
9 didn't make much sense to me.

10 Can you talk about mandatory minimums? What
11 is your response to the bills that the legislature has
12 introduced and passed out of the House? And is there a
13 better way?

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, drug mandatory -- I
15 think in the context of the hearing -- and my discussion was
16 specifically about drug mandatories. And my concern,
17 especially in this environment and in this context, what
18 we're seeing come into the system -- and when I say "we,"
19 not just at the state level, but at the county level -- is
20 you see folks who are getting addicted to opioids and don't
21 have a long criminal history. But they have a series of
22 crimes. And the caveat I always say is, "There's some bells
23 you can't unring."

24 And it doesn't matter what's the cause. If
25 there's a violent crime, we're talking about a different

1 ball game.

2 But specifically for drug offenses, Florida
3 passed legislation, I believe in 2003, that was very
4 analogous to the drug mandatories that the House passed.
5 And the stunning number out of that was that 62 percent of
6 everyone who were serving time on that, it was their first
7 time incarcerated.

8 So the concern with drug mandatories in
9 particular is sometimes we catch not the upper level drug
10 dealers. And let me be very clear, the people in the top of
11 the org chart for these drug dealers are violent criminals
12 who should be locked up as long as we can.

13 The problem is with legislation, oftentimes
14 we end up overincarcerating lower level individuals and they
15 come out worse. So when you talk about drug mandatories in
16 particular, that's my concern with those.

17 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: So your
18 concerns are specifically about drug mandatory minimums, and
19 in particular, to folks who don't have a long criminal
20 background, who are addicted themselves, and get caught up
21 in the system and wind up with a harsher sentence?

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KRUEGER-BRANEKY: Okay. Thank
24 you, Mr. Secretary.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative

1 Helm.

2 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Thank you, Mr.
3 Chairman.

4 I have a question about inmate education and
5 training, because it's truly my belief that an inmate should
6 be in training or supervision to learn something at least
7 eight hours a day and not sit in the cell and watch
8 television. But the Governor's 2018-19 budget recommends an
9 increase in funding for inmate education and training of
10 about \$2.2 million, or just over five percent, to a total of
11 44.2 million. However, even with the increase, the line
12 will still be less than the 44.9 million that was spent two
13 years ago.

14 So what cost saving measures were used to
15 produce this decline in expenditures, and what has been the
16 performance of these educational programs in recent years,
17 and were these cuts made without a reduction in
18 program performance?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay. I'll try to get
20 those in order.

21 Let's start with, "Do the programs work?"
22 Yes. RAND Corporation did a study that inmates
23 participating in education programs have significantly lower
24 recidivism than those who don't. 39.5 percent of the folks
25 who come in our front door don't have a high school diploma.

1 So we do -- folks are required to do 300 hours unless
2 they're serving less than a year. Then we just don't have
3 the time to get them through the programming.

4 We also offer, I think, up to 90 different
5 vocational programs. We have not cut programs. We've
6 certainly gotten more efficient at the delivery of programs.

7 One of the things -- we got a million dollar
8 grant from the Department of Ed two years ago. We're
9 finishing up the second year, specifically around workforce
10 development. And what it really looks to do is identify an
11 inmate's aptitude and ability, and put them on a path to get
12 a sustainable job on the way out.

13 So I think we've really gotten smarter. We
14 started partnering with other agencies. We have a
15 partnership with banking on financial literacy now. So I
16 think we're doing a better job of partnering with the
17 community.

18 Certainly, you can always use more money, but
19 we have quite adequate educational offerings in our
20 facilities.

21 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: Are the inmates
22 encouraged to do this?

23 I don't know that many people who have come
24 out of prison, but I do know some that were in for DUIs and
25 I've questioned them, like, "What happened when you were

1 in?" And I don't get a lot of, "I had a lot of training."

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, actually, programs
3 are pretty popular. And people are incentivized through,
4 "you're more likely to be paroled if you participate in a
5 program," so we have required programs and then other
6 programs. So participation and motivation level of folks
7 wanting to participate in both work and vocational and
8 educational is not, has not been an issue for us.

9 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: All right. Well, we
10 like the fact that you spend less money, but we want the
11 programs to continue.

12 I also have a question about Probation and
13 Parole. I'm told that the total number of parolees and
14 probationaries under state supervision was 42,069 as of
15 December 2017. And what's the average agent to parolee
16 ratio now and will that ratio change for 2018 or '19?

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Go ahead.

18 CHAIRMAN DUNN: Okay. When we're talking
19 about caseload ratios, right now, the agent to parolee ratio
20 is 64 to 1, as a general across the state. The low that we
21 were down to a little bit over a year ago was down to 54 to
22 1. However, there is a large class who will be graduating
23 next Friday from the academy. And after they get out and on
24 the street, the agent to parolee ratio is expected to be
25 back down to 52 to 1. And I just want to kind of put that

1 in the right perspective.

2 When you're talking about medium to high
3 caseloads, your goal is those medium to high caseloads
4 should be on a 50 to 1 and the specialized intensive
5 caseloads, such as sex offender, mental health, opioid
6 caseloads, they should be down to 40 to 1. And then you
7 have what we call administrative caseloads, which are your
8 very minimal folks that have been out for a while and done
9 well. They can be on caseloads that are as high as two to
10 three hundred to one without an issue.

11 Now, mind you, remember, those are folks that
12 are getting near the end of their supervision period, so...

13 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: What's the average cost
14 for managing a parolee versus keeping an inmate in prison?

15 CHAIRMAN DUNN: Well, that's an easy one.
16 Since we already talked about the average is somewhere
17 around 48,000 for an SCI bed, the average for a parolee is
18 about 3500.

19 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: And are you having any
20 problems with these people, the supervisors, becoming
21 friends with the people who are released from prison? I've
22 heard that sometimes becomes a problem.

23 CHAIRMAN DUNN: There have been individual
24 instances over the years. We have a policy where there is
25 nonfraternization with anyone under county or state

1 supervision, as far as a social setting kind of thing.

2 And yes, there has been individual -- but
3 that's very rare that we have that.

4 REPRESENTATIVE HELM: All right. Thank you.
5 We have the red light.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
7 Bullock.

8 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Thank you, Chairman.
9 Good morning, Secretary. How are you doing
10 today?

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good. How are you?

12 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Last month, I had
13 the opportunity to visit with some youthful offenders
14 between the ages of 13 and 17 in our county jail. I sat
15 with them and I shared stories with them, and we talked. At
16 the end of that conversation, I asked those young boys how
17 many of them have had a parent that had been incarcerated.
18 Every single one raised their hand. I asked them how many
19 had been a victim of a crime. Nearly everyone had raised
20 their hand. And surely everyone raised their hand because
21 they knew someone who was a victim of a crime.

22 I left that day a little disheartened. As a
23 mother of two young boys, I saw my own children in those
24 boys' faces. And I left telling them I love them. And I
25 actually said those words out of my mouth. And some of them

1 repeated it, and one even told me he had not heard that in
2 quite some time.

3 What I learned is that we had failed those
4 young boys, not just the systems that we have in place, but
5 society as a whole.

6 And so what I'd like to know from you is, you
7 know, what are we doing to address youthful offenders? What
8 are the costs to support those young people that are in our
9 state prisons, particularly because we know they will return
10 home? And also what are we doing to help young people in
11 our communities that are either victims of crime or young
12 people who have parents who are incarcerated? We know the
13 numbers are staggering.

14 Last year, we enacted the First Chance Trust
15 Fund. So if you can, talk a little bit about the reasoning
16 behind the First Chance Trust Fund, as well as how we're
17 preparing young people to return home after they have made
18 that mistake and found themselves incarcerated.

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. So we'll start with
20 the First Chance Trust Fund. And the thought behind that
21 was to find a way to fund support programs for kids impacted
22 by crime.

23 And I think what you accurately point out is
24 children who have a parent incarcerated. Just from the
25 state level, we have about 81,000 kids with a parent

1 incarcerated. Are also the kids who are likely to be
2 victims or the child of a victim of a crime.

3 When you look at our population, one of the
4 very consistent things is childhood trauma. And so the
5 thought is to fund some of these existing programs in the
6 community, like Big Brothers and Big Sisters is a great
7 example or Boys and Girls Club, of prosocial supports that
8 wrap supports around kids that, frankly, they used to get
9 from families. And the reality is with the breakdown of the
10 family, these kids are just in a bad way.

11 And so -- but we know that when we wrap
12 prosocial supports around kids, they have better outcomes.
13 So that's really the thought behind it.

14 And I really appreciate the huge overlap
15 between victims and perpetrators, especially in some of the
16 communities. And the language in First Chance is to target
17 communities that are biggest feeders to the criminal justice
18 system. So that was the thought behind First Chance.

19 As far as youthful offenders in the
20 Department of Corrections, males go to SCI Pine Grove, and
21 we have very specific cognitive behavioral programming for
22 them. Generally, if we get someone who's under the age of
23 18, they're going to be with us for a while. We rarely get
24 someone who's under the age of 18 who's just serving a
25 relatively short time frame. So again, those programs would

1 look a lot like parenting, like limit setting, like
2 providing tools to manage conflict, and those kinds of
3 things. But it's a challenging population.

4 If you look at the group that's highest risk
5 to commit violence in our prisons, the highest risk to
6 recidivate, it's those under 25, and that's the folks, you
7 know, you're talking about.

8 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: You mentioned that
9 the males go to Pine Grove. It's my understanding that the
10 women, young girls, go into facilities like Muncy and Camp
11 Hill because there isn't a facility just for them, but then
12 they're sort of isolated from the rest of the population.

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: How do we serve
15 those? Go ahead.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. So with females,
17 it's a challenge because we don't have big numbers. So a
18 couple of years ago, we had one female under the age of 18.
19 But there's a federal law called PREA, the Prison Rape
20 Elimination Act, that forces us to keep sight and sound
21 separations, juveniles separated from those who aren't
22 juveniles, sight and sound. So it really forces our hand,
23 and in the case of Muncy, where you only have one -- with
24 males it's not a problem because we have enough males that
25 that's not an issue. With females, it's a really

1 challenging --

2 REPRESENTATIVE BULLOCK: Yeah. I met that
3 young lady and she shared some of her concerns.

4 I'd like to thank you for the work that
5 you're doing. As a child whose father was incarcerated, I
6 understand the work and the impact that those kind of
7 community programs can have on a young person's life. So
8 thank you.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
10 Sonney.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.

13 Good morning, Mr. Secretary.

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good morning.

15 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: I want to go back a
16 little bit and talk about medical. I think you're
17 projecting a savings of approximately five million in
18 medical costs this year, but yet, asking for about
19 19 million more in next year's budget. If you could,
20 explain that, you know, how we have a \$5 million savings as
21 compared to a \$20 million increase.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: Five million this year --

23 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Yes.

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: -- savings increase --

25 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: And then you're

1 asking for about 19 and a half million more --

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

3 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: -- for next year.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: So one, again, I spoke
5 earlier about staff costs and contractual increases hit us
6 across all line items. But medication in particular and the
7 number of inmates who get medication is increasing.

8 And one of the things that's really
9 increased -- tripled, frankly -- over the last 20 years is
10 the number of inmates over 50, which the feds classify as
11 elderly. I bristle to say that as someone who's turning 49,
12 so I'm not hating on anybody around here. But that's how
13 they classified it, 50. That's 21 percent of our population
14 and 80 percent of them are on medication.

15 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: I remember several
16 years ago that your challenge with medication at that time
17 was specifically towards mental health. You know, is that
18 still the issue today or is it the --

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Not the sole issue.

20 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Is it the cost of the
21 care for opioid addiction?

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: In some cases --

23 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Obviously, drugs are
24 involved with that.

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. So the cost for

1 opioid addiction was -- you said 38 to 40 million? That,
2 but we're seeing more chronic conditions, such as hepatitis
3 C.

4 Just to give you a for instance, hemophilia,
5 we have six people with hemophilia. Each person costs over
6 \$1 million a year to provide that treatment.

7 So the aging population with some more
8 complicated medical conditions just drive our costs up.

9 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: And so that is really
10 overshadowing the cost for the medical treatment for mental
11 health and opioids, just that aging population and the
12 general health condition?

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: Some of those treatments
14 are very expensive. I don't know if it's overshadowing. I
15 can get you a quantified list of what the pain points --
16 pain points -- what the costs are by condition. I think we
17 can break it down like that.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: And so how much has
19 this risen, then, the cost of medical care?

20 And you kind of alluded a little bit that
21 some of those increased costs in medical, that is associated
22 with contractual obligations. You mean for health care
23 insurance? Is that part of that 19 million?

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: No. So we have a medical
25 contract for upper level providers that has an annual

1 increase built in the contract. That's competitively bid,
2 and I think we're in year three or four of that contract.
3 But also, we also employ our own health care staff and
4 they're covered under an agreement. So they would get
5 increases.

6 But I can break it down, the increase, for
7 you.

8 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: I think that would be
9 important.

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: And so are your --
12 the population that is coming in with opioid problems, do
13 you immediately get them on medication so that they're not
14 going through withdrawals and that, you know, they can
15 hopefully transition off of that medication throughout their
16 stay?

17 And what is the average stay of a prisoner in
18 Pennsylvania?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Probably two and a half
20 years. Yeah, between two and a half and three years.

21 See, at the prison level, we're very
22 fortunate that we rarely -- other than parole violators, we
23 don't get people directly from the street. So most of the
24 time, they're detoxing in jail, which is, you know, very
25 complicated. So in general, most of our commitments aren't

1 going through detox.

2 We do -- we've seen a significant increase in
3 parole violators with opioid addiction and put some detox
4 protocols in place for that group. But we don't -- that
5 hits the counties a lot more than it hits us.

6 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: Because it's a timing
7 thing, they're just not, you know, in a program long enough
8 to be able to be successful; is that why?

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: No. Everyone who comes to
10 a state prison -- again, other than parole violators -- goes
11 through a county jail first. So generally, by the time
12 someone's through the county jail system and gets sentenced
13 to a state prison, they're months out, six, seven, eight
14 months out, so they've gone through that physical detox.

15 But we do identify addiction at the door and
16 plug people into programs. And we really try -- what the
17 research says is effective, from a program standpoint, is to
18 do it closer to release and then a follow-up in the
19 community, so we really try to back end it towards the time
20 when they'd be considered for parole.

21 But the medication-assisted treatment that
22 we're going to go to, targeting people who have less than a
23 year to serve, that will start right when people come in the
24 front door.

25 REPRESENTATIVE SONNEY: I see my time is up.

1 So thank you.

2 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: And I'll follow up on that
4 stuff for you.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
6 Kinsey.

7 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Thank you, Mr.
8 Chairman.

9 Good morning, Chairman.

10 Good morning, Secretary.

11 Representative Sonney actually touched on
12 some of the same concerns, so I'm just going to try to drill
13 down, if I may, just for a quick second.

14 Mr. Secretary, I think you mentioned that
15 more than 20 percent of the inmates in the state system are
16 over the age of 50. But then I thought I just hear you
17 mention that the average stay is three years or less. So
18 are we seeing that inmates are coming in at an older age or
19 is it -- like how do we see that balance there?

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: So it's a combination of
21 two things. One, life means life in Pennsylvania. So we
22 have 5,000 people, or 10 percent of our population, that is
23 never going to get out, all right? So that's a big piece of
24 our aging population, is lifers, some who have decades
25 incarcerated. Other than juvenile lifers, they're going to

1 die in prison, so that increases.

2 But we've also seen over the past couple of
3 years an increase in older folks coming in. So we actually
4 have bimodal distribution, so we see a lot of under 25s and
5 then we're seeing a growing number of older inmates. I
6 guess over -- yeah. So the average age of people coming in
7 increased by seven years.

8 That may be attributed to opioids. I would
9 assume that's a piece of it because it's hitting all across
10 the continuum and all across the age continuum. But we've
11 seen that growing over the past several years.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay. So -- and
13 thank you for sharing that.

14 So as we talk about the aging inmate
15 population being more expensive, do you have -- for what you
16 just mentioned, so do we have -- I guess you would have data
17 that shows -- and do you have that information, that
18 knowledge, right now, like in regards to what the actual
19 costs may be for individuals over the age of 50 versus under
20 the age of 50?

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, I don't have it
22 memorized, but I can get it to you, though.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: Okay. I appreciate
24 that.

25 And earlier you talked about -- or as we

1 talked about -- the increase or the expense for those
2 individuals over the age of 50. And I think you touched on
3 this also in regards to maybe some of the health concerns.
4 Because initially, I was thinking that maybe the opioid
5 epidemic was one of those outstanding costs, but then you
6 also talked about mental health, you talk about hepatitis C.
7 What about sickle cell or some things of that nature? Are
8 we seeing like an increase with --

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't know that we've
10 seen an increase in sickle cell. It's been pretty steady.
11 But again, if you look at over 50 versus under 50, you'll
12 see 80 percent of folks over 50 are on medication, so
13 receiving medical treatment. So as our numbers get up, it's
14 a cost driver certainly.

15 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: So do you see the
16 trend, do you see a continued trend of folks over the age of
17 50 continuing to come? I think you just mentioned that it's
18 tripled, but are we still seeing that as a future trend?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: We have. Yeah, we have
20 over -- I think the past three years, we've seen that kind
21 of bimodal distribution, where we have a lot of young folks
22 coming in, and then a bunch of 45-pluses coming in.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: So earlier, one of my
24 colleagues had asked about, I guess, the type of education
25 supports that individuals receive while they're

1 incarcerated. So for those individuals over the age of
2 50 -- and I'm over the age of 50.

3 You know, they say you can't teach an old dog
4 new tricks, but I disagree with that. So -- and I'm not an
5 old dog either.

6 But -- so is the educational or the supports
7 that are resources -- I guess the resources are still there,
8 but are we still finding like those individuals over the age
9 of 50 still taking advantage of those supports that you
10 offer, like the educational aspect, as well as additional
11 training?

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, and we individualize
13 treatment plans, but you know, the same thing drives people.
14 Lack of education -- you know, people who aren't educated
15 are more likely to be incarcerated. If we want folks to
16 stay out, we have to develop vocational skills so they can
17 actually get adequately employed in a field that they can
18 actually get a job in. And that's really what that federal
19 grant hits at.

20 So, yes, I think we have folks all on the age
21 continuum in programs. And again, one of the things that
22 drives those numbers up are lifers who aren't going to get
23 out, so the vocational programs are really targeting folks
24 who are going to get out.

25 REPRESENTATIVE KINSEY: That's it for my

1 questioning.

2 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

3 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
6 Delozier.

7 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Thank you, Mr.
8 Chairman.

9 Secretary, thanks for being here.

10 Chairman, thanks for being here.

11 My questions to the secretary, I promise I
12 won't ask about sinkholes or -- I will follow up with the
13 selling of the property, though, of course. It's an
14 ongoing --

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's been about a year
16 since we spoke.

17 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Yeah, exactly. An
18 ongoing saga of being able to work with Lower Allen.

19 My questions come into play as to the -- I
20 was going through a bunch of things and having Camp Hill
21 SCI, obviously, hear a lot of different feedback from
22 different sources and the ability, whether they're in the
23 prison or outside the prison or have somebody in the prison.
24 One of the issues that came up at one time -- and I just
25 want to ask some quick questions on that and get to another

1 issue -- is inmate jobs and those that are allowed for the
2 inmates to work on their -- what are the qualifications for
3 someone to get a job in the prison?

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: It would depend on what
5 job. There's like a hierarchy.

6 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. So I know
7 there's different rankings as to how much --

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: -- and everything,
10 so it depends on that?

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, yeah. I mean, some
12 jobs don't take, cutting grass doesn't take a whole lot of
13 skill set. Being a tutor takes more. Housing -- I mean, it
14 depends on skill and ability.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And are these jobs
16 necessarily -- like what Representative Helm was talking
17 about -- in the sense of the training for getting out, as
18 well, to be used, tools to be used after they get out or is
19 this simply their ability to earn money while they're in
20 jail?

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Both.

22 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And how many of the
23 inmates fall into the ability to work?

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think 70 percent.

25 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: I didn't hear that.

1 I'm sorry.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think it's around
3 70 percent.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Seventy percent?
5 Okay.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Somewhere in that
7 ballpark. If that's inaccurate, I'll get you an accurate --

8 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. Do you know
9 what that costs the budget? I know it's different ranges,
10 19 cents. I mean, I know it's not a lot.

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: I can get you the specific
12 amount. I don't know it offhand.

13 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. And that
14 would come out of just general operation; is that correct?
15 Or is there a particular line item that deals with paying
16 for the -- okay.

17 And why do -- the jobs in and of themselves
18 and everything else, the point that I noticed also in the
19 bulletin, is the fact that -- if you don't have enough jobs,
20 they get unemployment.

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, something like that.

22 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. Why do they
23 get unemployment?

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's --

25 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And I don't mean

1 unemployment -- to be clear, it's not Labor and Industry
2 unemployment. It's 72 cents a day.

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: Seventeen cents an hour,
4 yeah.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Yeah, it ends up,
6 yeah, about 17 cents -- and the ability in the document. So
7 it says, you're paying them because we don't enough jobs.
8 Why are we paying them?

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't have a good
10 answer, actually.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay.

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: I mean, I know the
13 rationale behind paying folks is, there's things we don't
14 provide --

15 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Absolutely, and
16 that goes into their accounts. I totally understand that.

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't have a good answer
18 for you.

19 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. Because I
20 think it's -- A, it comes out of the budget, and B, it's
21 a -- I mean, I understand why people have jobs in prison,
22 not only to give them a trade possibly or skills that they
23 can use and to earn cable or whatever they need to buy out
24 of the things, but -- or God forbid, restitution, but that's
25 a whole other issue.

1 My other issue that I bring up is the issue
2 of the First Chance Fund. And I know you were an integral
3 part of the language that went into the bill, which I have
4 an issue, is the fact that the bill in and of itself that
5 was put into law was not debated or vetted or even a hearing
6 being held on it, so there's a lot of questions.

7 And I'm on PPCD so we have a lot, there's a
8 lot of language that has -- we just don't understand how we
9 are going to accomplish this.

10 One of the issues that comes up is a
11 secretary may ask for the donation of one percent of a
12 \$5 million contract or more. I'm just asking for, in your
13 interpretation as the Secretary of Corrections, what
14 parameters "may" falls into?

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: When we bid contracts over
16 5 million --

17 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Right.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: -- that one percent is
19 included in that bid process.

20 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Well, part of the
21 law says that the secretary may or may not -- well, it's
22 inferred, may not -- ask for this donation to the First
23 Chance Fund. But what we don't know is what are the
24 curricular or what are the criteria that you would decide
25 may or may not, or are you saying that you would just make

1 all of them?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's across the board.
3 Anything over five million, it will go into the bid process.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: And the dollar
5 value that we have with the five million, is that one
6 percent before the end bid or on top of the bid?

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's part of the bid
8 process.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: So everybody that
10 comes in that knows that the contract will be over
11 \$5 million knows that they will be making a one percent
12 donation to the First Chance Fund?

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

14 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. So it's
15 across the board so there's no ability -- there is language
16 that says "the secretary may," so I'd like to kind of follow
17 up with you to figure out what that qualification is because
18 in reading the language in the bill and what was passed, it
19 gives you authority to ask for it or not.

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay. I can certainly
21 follow up.

22 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. Because like
23 I said, when we've had our -- we're talking about it at
24 PPCD, as well, to enact things, and those were one of the
25 questions that we had had, and granted, it was my question,

1 but it was the ability -- they didn't have a good answer for
2 that either, so the clarification would be very beneficial
3 and we would appreciate that.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. And I will follow
5 up with you.

6 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Thank you.

7 Oh, and I'm sorry, Chairman. I just want to
8 point out that the one language that was in the First Chance
9 Fund stipulated that it had to be high truancy, high crime,
10 and high drop-out. And I would just point out there that
11 the problem with that language in the bill, again, not
12 vetted, was the issue that Cumberland County's children of
13 inmates are not going to be eligible for any of those
14 dollars in the First Chance Fund because we don't fall into
15 any of those criteria, so I think that criteria is very,
16 very limiting as to who exactly would be benefiting from
17 that.

18 But thank you very much.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Thank you.

20 Representative Kim.

21 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Good morning, Chairman
22 and Secretary. Thank you for being here today.

23 Secretary, I heard that you said that this is
24 your eighth budget. So we can safely credit you for the
25 things have been going on in the past eight years -- and

1 your team, obviously, you have a fabulous people and I
2 really appreciate all the work that they do.

3 But in terms of your vision of humanizing
4 inmates and surrounding them with services and programs that
5 they need, seeing them as a person, getting them better so
6 they don't come back -- and it's true that shrinking prison
7 populations are actually the biggest savings. And you've
8 closed a prison. Congratulations. I mean, I feel bad for
9 some of the folks who had to leave the prison in terms of
10 work-wise.

11 Do you see another facility being closed in
12 the near future, maybe in the next eight years? How was
13 that process? Was it a difficult one?

14 And again, we want to see smaller prison
15 populations in the future.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. We don't anticipate
17 a prison closure. It's not assumed in this budget.

18 The population in general is projected to go
19 down, however, there's some things coming down the pike, one
20 of which is a fentanyl sentence enhancement that has the
21 potential to increase our population by about 800.

22 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Wow.

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: That should go into
24 effect, I believe, in June. So I'm not sure what the
25 population is going to do over the next two years. That

1 will be --

2 And again, the 800 could be a conservative
3 estimate. It's not -- it's going to be difficult to
4 project, but that's what we're planning for. So assuming
5 that kicks in and that's accurate, it would be difficult to
6 see prison closures with an 800-person increase, which is
7 almost a prison.

8 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Right.

9 Representative Bullock asked some of the
10 questions and concerns that I had, but she said it a lot
11 more eloquently than I could ever do. But when a parent,
12 especially a mother, goes to prison, there is trauma for the
13 children. And I know that the women population is growing.

14 What are you guys doing in terms of reuniting
15 families and making sure that they stay in touch, so that
16 life goes on as normal as possible when they leave prison?

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. So first, just to
18 briefly touch on the fact that although our population is
19 projected to decrease over the next five years, our female
20 population is projected to increase, which is consistent
21 around the country. The fastest growing part of
22 corrections' populations right now is females. I don't
23 really have a good explanation as to why.

24 We have parenting, mothering programs at both
25 of our female facilities. We also have what's called a

1 family reunification lot where we contract with community
2 groups to provide family reunification services. Probably
3 the biggest step we're taking is opening the female housing
4 unit on the grounds of Graterford, since about a quarter of
5 our female population comes from Philadelphia. And if you
6 add the collar counties, we have a large population that's
7 coming from the southeast. So moving them physically closer
8 as they get closer to getting out will allow us to start
9 rebuilding some of those family ties.

10 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: All right.

11 And my last question would be, because when
12 population is growing, you are having to deal with different
13 needs, including women's health and feminine products. And
14 my request is that, you know, women don't have to pay for it
15 in prison, that it should be a service that all women should
16 be able to have.

17 Thank you.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: And we do provide that
19 service. We do provide feminine hygiene products.

20 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Okay. We've heard that
21 some women had to pay for that. We can talk afterwards.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: Let's talk.

23 REPRESENTATIVE KIM: Thank you.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
25 James.

1 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Thank you, Mr.
2 Chairman.

3 Gentlemen, thank you, for your testimony
4 today. Got a couple of policy questions for the Department
5 of Corrections, please.

6 And I'd like to start by talking about the
7 prospect of outsourcing certain services, such as health
8 care or dining facilities, that sort of a thing. And I know
9 you have unique circumstances, but sometimes those actions
10 result in the public sector -- or the private sector -- in
11 considerable savings.

12 Is there anything going on in that area in
13 the Department of Corrections?

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: So let me start with
15 medical. Currently we outsource upper level providers, so
16 doctors and the like. The nurses and below are contracted
17 by us. We're not planning on doing that. We think it's a
18 model that delivers constitutional level health care.
19 Frankly, compared to most systems, our lawsuits around
20 health care are minimal and we think that's the kind of
21 thing where you can be penny-wise and pound foolish. You
22 know, you lose one big lawsuit, you make up for the cost
23 difference. And I could -- I won't embarrass some states,
24 but I could provide you with some states where you can read
25 about full privatization. I just don't think it's a great

1 model.

2 As far as food service, this year we started
3 a contract with ArrowMark to outsource the purchasing of
4 food. As far as a full privatization of food service,
5 again, I don't think it's been a good proven model. I
6 think if you look at -- Michigan is the state that went
7 full private food service and undid it two years later
8 because of specifically issues with food quality, but
9 beyond that, with the staff, because you save money.
10 There's no magic. You just pay staff less. And when
11 you get inferior staff, you have more of the
12 fraternization kind of issues. And that was the
13 experience in Michigan.

14 So outsource the purchasing of food, which
15 will save us about five million this year, cutting
16 through some of our bureaucracy around purchasing and
17 those kinds of things. But as far as outsourcing the
18 staff, I just don't think it's a good idea.

19 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Okay. But savings
20 have been recognized.

21 Second issue, if you will, on that is under
22 the category of purchasing. I would assume that your
23 organization purchases various kinds of equipment, small and
24 large table saws, chainsaws, things of that nature.

25 A couple administrations back, apparently DOC

1 Rozzi.

2 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: Thank you, Mr.
3 Chairman.

4 Good morning, Secretary.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good morning.

6 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: My first question is,
7 what do I tell a mother who calls my office, tells me that
8 her son just entered the, you know -- or not entered, but
9 was in the halfway house in Reading in Adappt and died of a
10 drug overdose? What do I tell her when she knows that's
11 supposed to be his way back into the general pop? What do I
12 tell that mother?

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. Those are difficult
14 conversations.

15 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: Especially when she
16 tells me about the amount of drug abuse that's happening
17 within the facility and how disgusting the facility is, what
18 do I tell her?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. Those are difficult
20 conversations. We've had -- the opioid epidemic has hit our
21 halfway houses across the state. And we've put a bunch of
22 steps in place to improve the conditions, but we're
23 struggling, just like everybody else.

24 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: So right now, you're
25 going to have a plan to address the substance abuse in these

1 halfway houses across the state?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: We have, yeah. We've --
3 probably the past --

4 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: We have? And are they
5 working or they're just not working, you know, in some
6 facilities, like they weren't working in Reading and in --

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: No. We've made
8 significant improvements across, combination of enforcement,
9 increased use of K9s. We're testing some technology on drug
10 detection, people coming in the door, coupled with increased
11 medication-assisted treatment and increased random searches.
12 So we're hitting it on all fronts.

13 Again, it's not just Reading.

14 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: Right.

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: We've had more fatalities
16 in Reading, but frankly, that's more a byproduct of where
17 the drugs come from and how much fentanyl is in the drugs.
18 As far as just overall overdoses, it's been across our
19 system, and 2017 was a terrible year for us.

20 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: No, and I understand
21 that we are in the pipeline, but I also -- what are we doing
22 to maintain oversight of these private companies like
23 Adappt? Why did it take so many deaths in that Adappt house
24 for them to finally say, "Now we're going to, you know,
25 we're going to upgrade the facility. We're going to put

1 millions into this facility and make it right now."

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, I don't know that
3 Adappt is an outlier. They've had issues at that facility.
4 We do have oversight and we take steps. And ultimately
5 we've walked away from some providers when they didn't
6 address the things we'd asked them to address, so we'll
7 continue to do that.

8 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: I appreciate that. I
9 think they need to be held accountable, just like everybody
10 else is held accountable here.

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: I agree 100 percent.

12 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: And having that
13 conversation with that mother, you're exactly right, what do
14 I tell her? Do I say, "I'm sorry the system failed," you
15 know, or just, "It just happened, sorry, ma'am."

16 It is a life that was lost that, you know,
17 I'm just hoping that we put the right policies in place here
18 to make sure there is correct oversight, to make sure that
19 the substance abuse and these private companies are being
20 held responsible.

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. I agree with that
22 100 percent, but even under the best circumstances, with the
23 lethality of some of the -- you know, it could be one shot.

24 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: Right. I understand
25 that. I just want to make sure that we're doing everything

1 possible to make sure that this doesn't happen.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Absolutely. I agree with
3 you.

4 REPRESENTATIVE ROZZI: Thank you.
5 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: You're welcome.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
8 Dunbar.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Thank you, Mr.
10 Chairman.

11 Good afternoon -- good morning.

12 Secretary, in the past we've had healthy
13 discussions on your use of outcome-based measurements, which
14 I've always been appreciative of. And in the last year, we
15 had a great deal of discussion, because we actually had some
16 numbers in front of us, we had a great deal of discussions
17 about controllable costs, costs you can control, most
18 notably over time.

19 In that discussion, we had talked about how
20 overtime had been reduced dramatically in the last several
21 years. From '14-'15, I think it was about five percent of
22 your total cost. And it had been reduced beneath that in
23 '16-'17, beneath four percent. And in your information you
24 gave us, you also said you had some more savings this year.

25 I was wondering what our projections are

1 going forward. Have we reached our baseline? You know, do
2 we know where we're at on that?

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. So we're projecting
4 a reduction of 90 million compared to, our high watermark
5 was about 105 million. But understand, the high watermark
6 as you said was '13-'14 or '14-'15?

7 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: '14-'15 by
8 percentage --

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: '14-'15 was the high
10 watermark, so understand that that 90 million is
11 significantly lower because of the contractual increases
12 over that time. And we've really --

13 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: And I understand it's
14 more than \$90 million in savings because baseline costs have
15 gone up, baseline salaries have gone up, as well.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't think we've hit
17 the low point yet.

18 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Okay.

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think we still have some
20 room to grow. One is the things -- a couple big initiatives
21 we've done is centralized hiring. And so we're doing a
22 better job of managing the complement we have. We have less
23 than 100 vacancies for -- or less than 200 vacancies for
24 correctional officers. It's an all time low for us.

25 So filling those positions -- and understand,

1 when we hire someone, they don't offset overtime until about
2 35 weeks when we can use them to do that, with training and
3 those kinds of things.

4 We've also done a better job of managing it
5 and overseeing it. It's something that's at the forefront.
6 It's monitored at my level and every level by facility. So
7 we're being more strategic. We do want to strike a balance.
8 We don't want to eliminate overtime because you want
9 overtime for unplanned things, like an unplanned hospital
10 trip. You don't want to have extra officers than you need
11 on, because that's expensive, too. But I think we still
12 have some room to go down as far as overtime.

13 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: So -- and I think
14 last year we saw in our budget where there was the
15 \$100 million reduction in state correctional institution
16 line item. Some of that is attributable to overtime.

17 This year, now, we're seeing an increase in a
18 line item of \$70 million. So I'm not exactly sure where the
19 increase is going, how much of it is employee costs. If
20 we're continuing along the lines of saving dollars on
21 overtime, which is one of the cost drivers you have the most
22 control over, and your complement isn't changing, where's
23 the extra dollars being allocated towards?

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. It's just the
25 rollover cost of 16,000 people with salary increases and

1 pension contributions. It's total, the total rollover cost
2 is 200 million.

3 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: And does -- and
4 excuse me for not knowing, maybe I should know this, but is
5 there one contract for all the way across or is it different
6 contracts for each?

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: No. We have, I believe,
8 eight or nine bargaining units we deal with, depending on
9 the job.

10 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: And what is an
11 average increase this year anticipated in labor contracts?

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: About two and a half
13 percent -- about five percent when you look at both the
14 increase and longevity increases.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Okay. Because I
16 think the cost increase on the line items was 3.3 percent, I
17 believe. At least that does work in that regard.

18 As far as complement, you are, your
19 complement, your total authorized is the same number as last
20 year. Last year you had pretty much all of them filled,
21 13640 out of 13729. Are you anticipating filling the whole
22 complement this year, like adding on additional staff?

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't know.

24 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Okay.

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: One of the big unknown is

1 opening SCI Phoenix and what issues we're going to have
2 around that. I don't anticipate, certainly, going over.
3 We're anticipating being pretty flat. But I can't tell you
4 that for sure.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: So you're
6 anticipating that the whole cost increase that we've having
7 is going to be because of personnel costs and general
8 increase, inflationary increases, we'll say, contractual
9 increases.

10 So how do we get the 100 million savings?

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: Last year?

12 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Yeah.

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, closing Pittsburgh
14 was 80 million.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Okay.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: And then we did the food
17 service. The ArrowMark contract we talked about was a -- we
18 projected it at eight million. It's going to land at about
19 five million in the first year. There was a couple of other
20 initiatives, I can't think of them offhand.

21 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Just real quickly
22 because I am out of time, the closing of Pittsburgh, we
23 didn't lose any complement of employees, so it was, the
24 80 million savings was solely on operations?

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: That and the offset on

1 overtime. When we filled vacant positions, it reduced
2 overtime quickly. We didn't have to wait that 35-week lag
3 from new employees.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Okay. Thank you.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: You're welcome.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
7 Donatucci.

8 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Thank you, Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 And it's good to see you, Mr. Secretary.

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good morning.

12 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: A lot of my
13 colleagues already asked a lot of my questions concerning
14 the cost drivers of health care and the initiatives you're
15 taking to reduce costs.

16 But can you tell me how our terminally ill
17 inmates are treated? Who takes care of them?

18 I read articles that there are inmates taking
19 care of inmates. Is there a hospice program? Can you
20 elaborate on that?

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. We have some -- we
22 have hospice or some other kind of lower level pallet of
23 care program at every one of our prisons. The prisons like
24 Graterford, where we have 700 lifers, Laurel Highlands,
25 which is our nursing home, Muncy, they would have hospice

1 programs that are staffed by inmate volunteers.

2 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Are inmates
3 transferred from a prison into where the hospice is?

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Generally not, unless they
5 transfer to like Laurel Highlands for their nursing home
6 care. But generally, if someone is in a hospice situation,
7 they're likely a lifer. So they'll likely die where they've
8 lived.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Okay.

10 So we already talked about how inmate
11 population is cared for while they're in prison. In light
12 of the department's work to coordinate better with parole,
13 how are corrections and parole working together to ensure
14 continuity of care as it relates to physical health care,
15 mental health care, even the substance abuse treatment? And
16 what results have you seen from your efforts to improve
17 coordination around these services as inmates transition
18 back to the community?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. I think we're
20 making progress. Last year, or two years ago, we really
21 started targeting individuals who are seriously mentally
22 ill, those who are in our Vivitrol pilot to make sure
23 they're signed up for medical assistance so we can plug them
24 into the programs they need as they get out. By mid-March,
25 we should have, be able to electronically sign people up for

1 the benefits they're eligible for. And that's really
2 critical for a group that, you know, 60 percent are on
3 medication, 30 percent mental health medication, along with
4 the increasing number of folks who are getting out on
5 Vivitrol.

6 Some of the areas where we're getting -- the
7 most critical is, we're seeing as this aging population, we
8 have folks getting out who aren't going to be able to go
9 home and need nursing home level of care, something along
10 those lines. So we've really focused on -- we call them
11 hard to place. And they're folks who are at the end of
12 their time and generally maxing out. So it's really about
13 getting other agencies, like Area Agency on Aging,
14 Department of Human Services, and as a group working with
15 the field supervision staff, really working together to try
16 to find solutions for folks getting out.

17 But as we work through this consolidation --
18 and the consolidation work group is, you know, we have
19 hundreds of staff members working on each aspect of the
20 corrections continuum. We're really looking for those
21 efficiencies, especially as it relates to information
22 passing and making good decisions as to level of supervision
23 on the back end, as well as what services an individual
24 needs to not commit another crime.

25 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: All right.

1 Do you know what the cost is of keeping this
2 running that way? Helping people once they're on parole and
3 making sure they're staying in the programs? Are they
4 getting the care they need?

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't -- in general, I
6 can get you a cost for what we pay for community
7 corrections. Parole -- I don't know exactly how to get the
8 cost you're looking for.

9 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: Okay.

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: But I can try.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: All right. Thank
12 you.

13 And lastly, to continue along the questioning
14 of Rep Rozzi, are you seeing an increase in positive drug
15 tests among parolees, inmates, or at the halfway houses?

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes, all across the board.
17 Now, we're a system who's had pretty good success in our
18 prisons with having a relatively low level of positive drug
19 tests. Historically, we've been at about .3 percent and
20 we're talking about thousands of tests a year. That number
21 is up to .67 percent. We're really struggling, even in our
22 prisons, with keeping out some of the synthetics and some of
23 the things that are difficult to detect.

24 So all three categories, we're seeing
25 increases in positive tests.

1 REPRESENTATIVE DONATUCCI: I'm sorry to hear
2 that. Thank you.

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
4 Keller.

5 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: Thank you, Mr.
6 Chairman.

7 And good morning, Mr. Secretary and
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 I want to just focus on a program we have in
10 Union County, Justice Bridge Housing. And I know that we've
11 been trying to run that with grant money and it becomes
12 difficult. But also I wanted to ask, there are some
13 barriers that allow us to use some state dollars to help out
14 the counties and some of these other programs.

15 Could we agree on getting together to try and
16 see what we might be able to do legislatively to break down
17 some of those barriers and actually help people that are
18 trying to succeed when they get out of the county jail or a
19 county prison, so that we don't see them in recidivism or
20 even at the state institutions? I mean, I guess I would
21 just like a commitment from you. I know you're good to work
22 with, but I just wanted to sort of get that on the record
23 that maybe we can work together.

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: Always up for a trip up
25 your way.

1 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: Okay. Then we'll
2 plan on doing that. I've got some --

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think we visit once a
4 year up there.

5 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: Yeah. Our Union
6 County Housing Director is here today, so maybe we can work
7 on that. So thank you for that commitment.

8 The thing I'd like to get back to, though,
9 and it's the thing when Representative Roae was questioning,
10 on the Vermont inmates that we house here in Pennsylvania.
11 If we didn't house them, would it cost us any more money?

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Would us cost more if we
13 didn't house them?

14 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: If we didn't house
15 them. I mean, we're just basically, I think you said, in my
16 terms, would be covering our fixed expenses. So it's
17 really, we wouldn't save any money if they weren't here.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, that's not accurate
19 because I think we're making money.

20 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: We are? Because
21 again, we're at \$40,000 and we're only getting 26. And the
22 reason I ask is --

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: Again, that's simple math
24 and that's not --

25 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: I get that. You're

1 covering your fixed expenses by having a person there. But
2 we could also move people to different locations and then
3 maybe not need as many staff if we fully utilized all our
4 locations and maybe took 10 or 20 out of one, 10 or 20
5 inmates and moved them to a different part of the state. I
6 think we could manage things.

7 The reason I ask is because I looked at a
8 report online, and in 2015, the state of Vermont, Department
9 of Corrections, it says that their instate cost was \$62,000
10 per inmate. Are you aware of that report?

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: No.

12 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: Okay. It also shows
13 their average out-of-state incarceration for like, I think
14 it was for 415 or 420 inmates, was 28,297, which is about
15 eight or ten, well, around eight percent higher than what
16 we're charging, so -- and it seems like we're doing a lot
17 more to help Vermont taxpayers, rather than manage things
18 and help the taxpayers here in the Commonwealth. I mean, I
19 guess just looking -- I get that you're covering your fixed
20 expenses.

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's beyond that, though.
22 So if Vermont left, we would have about five million less,
23 it would five million less. So we're -- on top of our fixed
24 expenses, we're bringing in \$5 million a year from those,
25 from putting them in empty beds that we already have

1 staffed.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: But if we were to
3 consolidate those empty beds, we could reduce staff at some
4 of our locations and save money, correct?

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: Not necessarily.

6 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: We wouldn't be able
7 to move some of our inmates around and save money, but -- I
8 mean, I find that hard to believe. I'd like to have a
9 discussion on that, also, because --

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: We certainly can. I mean,
11 we've closed prisons and housing units over the past eight
12 years whenever we can, but --

13 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: But fully maximizing
14 the asset and not having eight beds in one correctional
15 facility open and 10 in another and 15 in another. Sooner
16 or later, you could fill a certain amount of our facilities
17 and drive down our costs. Would that be a true statement?

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: We could have -- not
19 necessarily, because different -- so what drives what prison
20 somebody goes to is often -- we don't offer the same
21 programs at every facility.

22 So for instance, we have 25 facilities. We
23 only have 14 facilities that someone who's seriously mental
24 ill can go to. So when you start taking those cuts --

25 I mean, look, we try to close housing units

1 whenever we can, certainly.

2 REPRESENTATIVE KELLER: But my point is, I
3 think we probably could have gotten a better deal from
4 Vermont when we're below eight percent, what they're getting
5 in other states, the average, so we're below the average by
6 eight percent. And they themselves are paying \$62,000,
7 according to their report, to house an inmate.

8 Thank you.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
10 Schweyer.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.

13 Gentlemen, over here. Good morning to you
14 all. Thank you for your testimony, as always.

15 Two things that I'd like to talk about.
16 First, looking a little bit at our county prisons. I find
17 that many times our counties do a remarkable job of piloting
18 other programs that could be replicable elsewhere across the
19 Commonwealth.

20 In Northampton -- I represent Lehigh County,
21 but over in Northampton County, they have a really unique
22 partnership with our Workforce Investment Board. And that
23 WIB, as you know, they have job training sites inside the
24 prisons, so nearing the end of the incarcerated individual's
25 time, they're able to get those job trainings.

1 Have you looked at doing that elsewhere?
2 Have you looked at trying to promote that either in other
3 counties or in any of your facilities?

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, actually, with
5 Lehigh County in particular, we've worked with their WIB and
6 did an event down there. I think it was two years ago.

7 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Yeah,
8 Lehigh/Northampton County has the same WIB, so they're in
9 Northampton County, in the prison, but they're not in Lehigh
10 County's prison yet.

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, but we use Lehigh
12 County as one of our reentry centers.

13 So with folks at the back end who are getting
14 out, a good approach for us -- because counties do a much
15 better job of plugging people into the infrastructure
16 because they know the people in the community.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Right.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: And so the approach we've
19 taken with that is to use the county infrastructure to
20 benefit. And Lehigh County is an example of that.

21 With our -- the million dollar Department of
22 Ed grant, it's specifically around workforce development.
23 And I believe we have a pilot in the Lehigh Valley. But
24 I'll have to get you specifics on that around, I think it's
25 around manufacturing.

1 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: But I'll get you specifics
3 on that.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Yeah, that would be
5 really interesting.

6 I've had former incarcerated folks, who are
7 now pillars of our community, who have been part of these
8 programs who are advocating for more of them. And I
9 certainly want to make sure that I represent what I'm
10 hearing on the ground from Allentown and from the Lehigh
11 Valley. I appreciate that.

12 Second topic I want to touch on, we did talk
13 early on in the hearing about mandatory minimums and the
14 costs. I'm going to take the same sort of concept, but
15 change it in a slightly different way.

16 There has been a tremendous amount of talk in
17 Harrisburg and in our communities about decriminalization of
18 marijuana, not necessarily legalization, but
19 decriminalization.

20 Would that have any impact on your or would
21 that still be mostly a local county issue in terms of
22 incarceration rates and costs?

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: I couldn't give you a
24 quantifiable impact. I think it would be minimal.

25 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: For the state, but

1 not --

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, for the state, not
3 necessarily for the counties.

4 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think where it may hit
6 states is with prior record score --

7 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay.

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: -- at some point, but I
9 wouldn't know how to quantify the approach of
10 decriminalization.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay. So a minimal
12 impact on our state Department of Corrections, but
13 potentially a much more significant, at least more
14 significant than minimal impact, for our county courthouses
15 or county prisons?

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. And I think you
17 have a couple of counties who in essence decriminalized, and
18 so I think you could get the data and quantify the impact it
19 has -- Philadelphia has done it quite some time ago.

20 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: I know York City
21 has.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think Harrisburg
23 recently did it.

24 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay.

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's something at some

1 point we can take a look at.

2 REPRESENTATIVE SCHWEYER: Okay, very good.

3 Thank you very much.

4 Gentlemen, have a good day.

5 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: I wanted to
8 announce that one of the judiciary subcommittee chairmen,
9 Todd Stephens, has joined us, as well. And I appreciate him
10 being here.

11 With that, we'll move to Representative
12 Boback.

13 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you, Mr.
14 Chairman.

15 Mr. Secretary, how many assaults currently
16 occur within our prison system on a monthly, annual basis?
17 And what steps have you implemented since the Auditor
18 General's 2016 audit on assaults was released to decrease
19 assault staff? Has there been any steps that you've taken
20 that you find successful?

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. And again, in the
22 context of a fatal assault on a staff member yesterday, I
23 just want to mention Sergeant Baserman again, because while
24 we've made some progress, those numbers, you know, don't
25 matter when you have a staff member attacked, and fatally

1 attacked. But we've seen a 14 percent reduction in assaults
2 on staff. At the same time, we've seen an increase in
3 inmate-on-inmate fights, so it's a mixed bag.

4 But assaults on staff are down, again, in the
5 context of a fatal assault on staff yesterday.

6 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: And is that since the
7 2016 AG's report, would you say, when he --

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

9 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: -- he did -- okay.

10 My next question kind of goes along the same
11 lines. How much money goes out for lawsuits against our
12 prison system per se per year? Give me a five-year span.
13 But every time I read the paper, it seems like somebody is
14 suing someone within or something happened inside, so
15 families come and sue. Is that accurate?

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: We get sued a lot, that's
17 accurate. I can get you the number, a five-year number of
18 successful lawsuits against us. But we get sued a lot.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Do you feel that the
20 price is astronomical? I mean, I'm assuming that, you know,
21 you talk about health care costs, pension costs, but I'm
22 wondering about lawsuit costs, how that lines up with your
23 figures. But I'll wait till you get back to me.

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, I'll get you that
25 information.

1 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: And regarding the
2 loss yesterday, you're absolutely right. One loss is one
3 too many. God bless him.

4 Last question, what do we need to do to help
5 the inmates when their time comes to go back into society?
6 What do we need to do? Because I do get questions -- and
7 they're far and few between -- about those who are coming
8 out, from their parents, and they can't get a job interview
9 because now they have a record and they're looking for
10 expungement, which of course, that falls under the guise of
11 our Governor, but -- if that happens at all.

12 So how do you help them get those jobs? I
13 know I asked this question last year. I mean, is there a
14 system where you have businesses willing to take those who
15 were corrected? That's why we call it a correction system,
16 to correct the behavior.

17 So do you have those who are willing to give
18 those who paid their time, give them a chance? And how do
19 you set that up for them? Because once you send them out, I
20 could see -- we talked about recidivism. If there's no job,
21 you know, it's easier to come back. Three hots and a cot,
22 and medical attention, when, for the most part, I can't help
23 but think that they want to succeed outside of prison, they
24 want that chance.

25 So what do you do?

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. We've seen more and
2 more businesses willing to hire people with a criminal
3 record. As a matter of fact, right now we were invited to
4 participate at a round table at the White House that they're
5 doing right now with big national employers talking about
6 giving people a second chance, folks like Uber, for
7 instance, folks like -- John's Hopkins is the number one
8 employers of people with a criminal record in Maryland.

9 We anticipate doing a similar round table
10 with us and the Department of Labor and Industry here in
11 Harrisburg, but we've seen significant -- especially in some
12 of the manufacturing areas. We've seen folks -- I mean,
13 it's difficult to get a job, it's not impossible.

14 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Especially if you're
15 giving them the proper training, as we've spoken of.

16 Would you let us know when you have that
17 hearing with Labor and Industry? I'd be interested in that.

18 Again, it's for the taxpayer. They
19 themselves want to become taxpayers, I would hope. So by
20 getting a decent paying, good paying job on the outside, I
21 think that's a goal that we all need to have for these
22 people who, you know, had an offense and are willing to
23 rectify.

24 Of course, we're not talking hard core. I'm
25 sure that's something else you have to deal with, but those

1 who want to make amends and want a good job.

2 So thank you.

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. You're welcome.

4 REPRESENTATIVE BOBACK: Thank you, Mr.
5 Chairman.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
7 Boyle.

8 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Thank you,
9 Mr. Secretary, for being here.

10 In 2012, there was a Department of Justice
11 study that determined that there were at least 200,000
12 sexual assaults a year in American prisons and that half of
13 the assaults were committed by staff.

14 I was wondering to what extent has our state
15 system implemented policies to prevent assault within
16 prisons by inmates on inmates and also by staff on inmates
17 or other staff.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. The federal law
19 that came out of that is called PREA, the Prison Rape
20 Elimination Act. And we actually have a yearly report I can
21 provide to you that quantifies all of our efforts, shows our
22 numbers by year. And I'd be happy to share that with you.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Another question I
24 have is that, in many communities, particularly in the city
25 of Philadelphia where I represent, a high number of people,

1 young men, are in prison, and due to sexual activity in the
2 prisons, STDs, and even AIDS is being acquired in the
3 prison. And then when the young men go out, when they're
4 freed, they're then spreading those STDs, and in some cases
5 HIV, in their host communities.

6 Is there any sort of preventative measures in
7 place in our state prisons to prevent exposure to STDs?

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: We test on the way in and
9 on the way out. And obviously, we provide treatment when
10 necessary. I don't know that that's been an issue for us.

11 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Okay. There's
12 definitely been national exposure to this issue, so I
13 strongly encourage the state system to do as much as
14 possible to prevent diseases.

15 Thank you.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: You're welcome.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
18 Quinn.

19 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Thank you.

20 It's very good to see you here again this
21 year.

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good morning.

23 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: You always come in so
24 well prepared and we appreciate it.

25 A question I asked a couple of years in a

1 row, you may recall it from last year -- you know what I'm
2 going to ask about -- the dependent benefit audit for
3 employees. You have a very large complement, 16,700
4 employees. I asked about this two years ago. Last year I
5 brought it up again, and said, "You know, has something like
6 that been done?" And you said, "No." And there's no good
7 reason why there wasn't.

8 Any update?

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: Embarrassingly, no, I
10 don't have an update.

11 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: When I ask next
12 year -- okay.

13 I'm going to move on to your budget. I don't
14 see a line item for IT and I get concerned with the growing
15 threat of cyber security. Am I missing it? And because of
16 time, if it's somewhere that you could direct me to, I'll
17 give it some study afterwards.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. I can give you the
19 IT spend.

20 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Are you comfortable
21 with the amount of money that you are investing, or your
22 department's investing, in the threat of cyber security?

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. We invest about
24 28 million. I mean, as comfortable as anybody can be in the
25 era we're in, as far as our cyber security.

1 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: So that \$28 million is
2 just for your cyber security effort or is that an IT --

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: That's the IT spend.

4 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: So that does HR and
5 all different things? I mean, it does everything else an
6 normal administrative IT system would have to do.

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes, I believe so.

8 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Okay. I would
9 appreciate that info. I look at -- and there was a little
10 bit of testimony with regard to the increase of
11 \$19.5 million into health care for next year. Is any of
12 those increased dollars going towards investment in
13 telemedicine -- which you know, we talked about it at
14 previous budget hearings to see potential, then cost savings
15 to come back from that.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, we continue to
17 expand our use of telemedicine. I can get you quantified in
18 the past couple of years and how much we've increased that.
19 We can -- especially in some of our rural areas, it's
20 difficult to find providers and we've significantly expanded
21 our use, both on the medical side and on the mental health
22 side.

23 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: I don't recall hearing
24 about that as part of the quantitative savings in a GO-TIME
25 analysis. Is that something that would qualify and it just

1 hasn't made it to -- because with transportation costs and
2 other things and knowing that we're giving the same quality
3 medical attention, because you know, obviously, you don't
4 want any services to be done just for cost savings. We want
5 to make sure that we're having the quality medical care.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Quite frankly, I think we
7 booked those savings under the Corbett administration, the
8 big ramp up into telemeds. I'm not sure how much the
9 expansion has actually saved us. We can take a look at
10 that, but I...

11 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Yeah, because I mean,
12 going back to the Corbett administration, where a number of
13 years the systems and technology has so much advanced, I
14 would be confident that there's far greater use and
15 applications for this within your system that could probably
16 give your guests faster service than they're getting waiting
17 for some specialists that just aren't in the area.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. We'll take a look
19 at that and the quantified.

20 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: On the same line of
21 health care, how do you establish your pharmaceutical
22 protocol? I ask that because with so many of these
23 phenomenal medicines out there, as they come off and their
24 patents release and generics come in, I don't know if your
25 pharmaceutical protocol is set up, you know, a couple of

1 years back and your contract is out, or -- how flexible are
2 you to be able to embrace generics, and in doing so,
3 provide, you know, good care, but cost savings?

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, as soon as a generic
5 comes out, we're able to get it. Our contract is flexible
6 enough to be able to grab those savings. We just bid -- we
7 just awarded the latest update to the pharmaceutical, I
8 believe late last fall. It's a Pennsylvania provider,
9 Diamond Pharmacy from Indiana, Pennsylvania.

10 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: I love to hear
11 Pennsylvania provider. I'm just making sure that as we have
12 such dynamics in that industry, that we're in a flexible
13 enough position to, you know, continue giving good quality
14 medicine, like medicine, but to reap the savings that comes
15 from other --

16 We talked about wraparound services to
17 support the children of the incarcerated. Are there
18 programs where you work directly with the schools,
19 especially in some of the areas where we've heard where
20 there's higher rates of incarceration?

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: We do a lot of
22 partnerships with community groups around kids. I don't
23 know that I would call it a program. And a bunch of our
24 facilities also really participate with the schools and the
25 providers for at-risk kids all over the Commonwealth.

1 REPRESENTATIVE QUINN: Okay. Thank you. My
2 light is up, but I'll follow through with you on some of
3 this.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
6 Everett.

7 REPRESENTATIVE EVERETT: Thank you, Mr.
8 Chairman.

9 And thank you, Mr. Secretary for being here
10 today.

11 Question, I think we have, what, about 48,000
12 people incarcerated in the system. Ballpark, what's the
13 breakdown between nonviolent offenders and violent offenders
14 out of that 48,000?

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's roughly 60 percent
16 part I offenses, more serious offenses, 40 percent part II
17 offenses.

18 REPRESENTATIVE EVERETT: So ballpark, 60-40.
19 Okay. Thank you.

20 Yeah, and my questions don't all -- there's
21 not a theme here, you'll notice very quickly.

22 It's my understanding that SCI Forest was
23 constructed back around 2004 and there's some amount of
24 square footage, thousands of square feet for a corrections
25 industry building that hasn't been completed, isn't being

1 used. Can you shed some light on what's going on with that?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. Actually, in the
3 next year, we're going to be announcing a partnership with
4 PennDOT for that space. So we found a use for that space.
5 And as soon as we formalize it, I'd be happy to share, but
6 we do have a use for that space and anticipate it being up
7 by the next time we have one of these hearings.

8 REPRESENTATIVE EVERETT: Great, great.

9 And the last question I have for you today,
10 do we charge inmates sales tax on the stuff that they
11 purchase at the commissary and the TVs and the other stuff
12 that they purchase?

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: No, I don't believe so.

14 REPRESENTATIVE EVERETT: Okay. Why not?

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't know.

16 REPRESENTATIVE EVERETT: Okay.

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: I can certainly check on
18 that.

19 REPRESENTATIVE EVERETT: Yeah. Thanks.

20 Thank you very much.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: With that, I
23 wanted to recognize also, we have been joined by
24 Representative Dom Costa, who's also not on the committee,
25 but is here to hear testimony today.

1 With that, I'm going to ask a couple of
2 questions I have before I move to the second round here. We
3 have two members on my side of the aisle who wish to ask one
4 more question.

5 But before we do, I want to follow up a
6 little bit on the Vermont issue.

7 What is our profit over our costs in the
8 Vermont contract?

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: Five million.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Five million
11 total, above our costs?

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: So our cost is
14 such amount, but we're going to make five million as profit?
15 I want to make that clear. It's not what we're bringing in
16 for Vermont.

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: It's what is the
19 profit.

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Okay, because --

22 Because you know, like in York County, and
23 I'm sure other county prisons, we ran out of space and we
24 make sure we make money from that to help pay our debt
25 service on the county prisons. So I just wanted to make

1 sure of that.

2 Next, on purchases, I wanted to follow up,
3 because we get a number of inquires from prison staff,
4 guards, staffers, concerning the purchasing and whether we
5 do and are buying at the cheapest price. They feel that
6 reports that the IS chairman and others have gotten is that
7 we are buying out of state, not from local merchants.

8 So, Secretary, can you make any comments on
9 that?

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: No, I mean, we follow the
11 Procurement Codes. I mean, if there's any specifics...

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: What I'm looking
13 for here is, are we buying out of state instead of buying
14 from local merchants, chainsaws, things like that that we
15 could get? Are we going and making sure that the local
16 people are on the state purchasing list?

17 I mean, that's one of the things that we know
18 how much money we save, but it also is making sure that the
19 local business community knows that they can be a part of
20 our state purchasing program and they can make a profit. I
21 mean, when you look at small businesses, you're purchasing
22 from out of state, you know, one of the things this general
23 assembly and the Governor always talks about, this Governor
24 and other Governors, is how we're working to help make sure
25 that we're purchasing within state and helping our own

1 business community.

2 So I guess the question is, is that what
3 we're doing? Are we doing that?

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, I believe so. Let
5 me -- I mean, we have 25 different prisons that purchase --

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: And I understand
7 that.

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: -- so I'm hesitant to say
9 that we're doing it across the board, and then someone goes,
10 "Ah ha, you bought such-and-such a saw from out of state."

11 But I can quantify and answer that question.
12 We can look at our actual purchases and provide you with all
13 of that information.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: It would be
15 interesting to see what purchases are made from out of
16 state, the quantity, the purchase total amount a year, and
17 how much is spent within Pennsylvania of your purchases like
18 chainsaws, things like that, equipment. So I'd like to see
19 those kind of things, because again, we like to spend money
20 in Pennsylvania.

21 Last thing is, one of the things that I
22 think -- and we've talked, Representative Krueger-Braneky
23 talked about mandatories. And I get that.

24 But one of the things that I think all of us
25 have to face in today's world is when I was growing up and

1 going to college at IUP, the drugs of then are not anywhere
2 near like the drugs are today. And parents and constituents
3 are very upset that their children are getting addicted by
4 people who are selling them drugs that are killing them.

5 We have a drug epidemic in this state, across
6 this nation, as we all know. And if you're a parent who has
7 lost a child, you're not real happy if somebody's getting
8 out of prison a little bit sooner.

9 And I get the whole mandatory thing. I
10 think, the fact that we've been lowering our prison
11 population by work release, some of the things that we're
12 doing for prisoners who are not violent are great things.
13 But there also has to be a consequence to some of these
14 things. And I realize they're not the big kingpins.

15 But also that pressure comes on politicians,
16 particularly when you see a crisis like this, just like
17 we're seeing in the whole shooting in Parkland. The
18 pressure comes on politicians to deal with that. And the
19 dealing with that doesn't always mean the right solutions.
20 But political pressures -- and I will tell you, the Jerry
21 Sandusky case -- we can go to any number of high profile
22 cases across this state, that all of a sudden, parents,
23 constituents, are screaming for a solution. And sometimes
24 the solutions that we find are not necessarily fixes to the
25 problem, but they look good politically.

1 And so I think those are the kind of things
2 we have to understand, is where the pressure comes on the
3 general assembly members, and even Governors and Presidents
4 and Congressmen, is the fact that when these things are
5 happening, pressure is there.

6 And I think that's why we have probation and
7 parole, to make those kind of decisions when they think
8 there's need to be granting those kind of things, there is a
9 balance, but it is very tough.

10 So I get what Representative Braneky talked
11 about, I do. But again, it's tough when you're a legislator
12 and somebody approaches you, and says, "You know what,
13 so-and-so got a such a light sentence and my son died," or
14 "my daughter died, my brother," whatever. So it just, there
15 needs to be a balance.

16 And I don't know -- I mean, Chairman Markosek
17 or any of us in the general assembly, and probably those in
18 Washington today, don't know how to handle that pressure
19 because people get so emotional over things that there is,
20 no listening to reason. So I --

21 Chairman Dunn, I think you wanted to respond.

22 CHAIRMAN DUNN: Chairman, if you wouldn't
23 mind, I would like to respond, because that does go to the
24 heart of what we do at Parole --

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN DUNN: -- is trying to balance,
2 looking at risk, looking at what programming folks have done
3 inside, what work they have done inside, most importantly,
4 what plans have they put in place for when they're going
5 outside.

6 I have been spending several days, in fact,
7 yesterday I spent all day at Benner, actually meeting with
8 the inmates that are eligible for parole within the next 12
9 months, explaining to them what's expected when they
10 actually come to their parole interview, what we expect them
11 to have in place for after they get out.

12 One of the things that we're going to be
13 doing this year, and the judiciary hearing members will get
14 bored by me, I'm sure, but I'm working with Mark Bergstrom
15 and the sentencing commission, and of course, our board
16 members, and we are looking at updating the parole
17 guidelines in accordance with the 2008 statute that told us
18 we were supposed to update them. We are getting to that.

19 But part of what we're doing is being very
20 deliberative about what will change. And I am coming around
21 this year to educate all of the judiciary members on what
22 does that mean, how do we use these assessments, what are
23 they for? Because, you know, depending on what assessment
24 we're looking at, you want to look at targeting different
25 things, and actually trying to make the whole process more

1 open. And as part of that, those pro-guidelines will come
2 before for the committees for their stamp of approval before
3 we put them in place.

4 So just to -- yes, there is a process and
5 part of it is going out to explain. And I'm going out to
6 meet with constituent groups. And if anyone in the
7 legislature wants me to come and talk to constituents about
8 how we do parole, I'm more than happy to get it put into the
9 schedule. In fact, I think I have one booked in two weeks
10 in Philadelphia.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: And, Chairman, I
12 think, I mean, I have to be honest with you, I have not
13 heard complaints about Probation and Parole, as far as maybe
14 there is some out there somewhere, but I mean, seriously,
15 since a number of years ago, we have not -- or at least I
16 have not, as a member of the general assembly, heard a lot
17 of complaints about the work that you have done and the
18 commission.

19 And that's why I say, is that, we are very
20 fortunate in York County. We started the whole drug court
21 situation and that has been an outstanding -- Judge Kennedy
22 has done an amazing job. He just stepped down and retired.

23 So there are ways of dealing with drugs, but
24 there has to -- we have to build a consensus on how to deal
25 with some of these things. And like I said, there is

1 always, no matter what kind of a case it is in the criminal
2 field anymore, a rush to judgment as to how to solve it.
3 And in most cases, those rush to judgments don't solve the
4 problem.

5 But we need more people speaking out about
6 that because you know, seriously, people lose their jobs
7 because nobody is explaining the real facts out there on
8 these kind of things. And I say that, and it really doesn't
9 have a whole lot to do with the budget process, but it
10 does -- you know, Representative Braneky is right, it could
11 drive up your costs. But we need to have a better and
12 broader discussion about how we handle criminals today. And
13 I think we have in Pennsylvania done a good job of getting
14 people back on the streets, hopefully in jobs and reformed.

15 You know, I -- Commissioner, I know when you
16 first took your position years ago, I believe under -- was
17 it under Governor Rendell?

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: No, Corbett. It feels
19 like Rendell.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Corbett, okay.

21 We had this discussion about the importance
22 of making sure that people that are in the state prisons are
23 able to read and write. Because if you come out of prison
24 without reading and writing skills, you can't get a job.
25 Almost today -- we might have to start -- I know we probably

1 are, teaching computers in school -- in prison.

2 So it's just, I just think it's something
3 that I wanted to bring to light only because there is
4 constantly a rush to put people in prison, and I get it.
5 And in some cases, I'm all for it. But if people in your
6 world don't discuss alternatives, just criticizing mandatory
7 minimums from your perspective isn't going to get the job
8 done. It has to be about educating people, about how and
9 what are the alternatives to those kind of things.

10 And that's not a criticism of you. I'm just
11 saying out there, we need to do a better job of that.

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. And I'd just say
13 we've seen a wave around the country, largely driven by the
14 right, on reducing the use of incarceration and making
15 better decisions. And all we're talking about is making
16 good decisions.

17 I think -- I recently met with the district
18 attorneys and obviously -- but we agree on most of what we
19 talked about, the mandatory minimum issue. And we don't
20 even philosophically disagree that we want higher level drug
21 dealers locked up for a long period of time. I don't think
22 that mandatory minimums are a precise enough instrument to
23 deliver that.

24 And one of the things -- and I don't see
25 Representative Grove, but he really put a big push on for

1 performance-based contracting and I would say just apply
2 that to criminal justice. You can't pass a bill that's
3 going to increase costs if you don't have an anticipation of
4 a return on investment. That's philosophically inconsistent
5 with, you know, fiscal conservatism.

6 And so I just say, apply the same thing, make
7 sure there's data that would suggest that a policy will
8 achieve what we're trying to achieve. That's all I'm
9 saying, and I think we can agree on who we want, we just
10 have to figure out how to get that group without locking up
11 a whole bunch of people who don't need to be locked up for
12 us to be safe.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: And in particular,
14 when the state budget, over the last many years, has
15 tremendously increased in the area of corrections, and you
16 know, people today are looking for results. And I think
17 you've been doing fairly good at getting those results. But
18 I think there's still a ways to go.

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Always, yes.

20 CHAIRMAN DUNN: Agreed.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: With that, for the
22 second round, I have one question each, short. I'll start
23 off with Representative Delozier. Keyword "short."

24 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Yes, I heard that.
25 And it is actually a short question.

1 question. Just balancing that out because you had mentioned
2 that you had a good complement, so at what point does
3 mandatory go away? Unless there's a emergency, obviously.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. And I can provide
5 you a breakdown. I think it's over the last five years, but
6 it's for a period of time.

7 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Okay. Great.
8 Thank you.

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: It will put a context
10 around it.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DELOZIER: Thank you very much
12 and he's yelling at me already.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
14 Roae, quick question.

15 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Mr. Secretary, earlier
16 you had said a number of what your costs are going up
17 because of the mandates and the union contracts, salaries,
18 benefits stuff like that. Do you remember what dollar
19 amount you said?

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think it's around
21 200 million. I can get you a specific.

22 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Because I was doing
23 some quick math. If you have 16,000 employees, 200 million
24 divided by 16,000 employees, that'd be \$12,500 a year per
25 employee increase over what you spent last year. That seems

1 like a pretty big increase.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, I can get you the
3 quantified breakdown.

4 REPRESENTATIVE ROAE: Okay. I'd appreciate
5 that. Thank you.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: You got it.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Again, one
8 question, Representative James.

9 REPRESENTATIVE JAMES: Lightning round.
10 Thank you.

11 Yes. This will be a quick question. I don't
12 know about the answer.

13 I'm thinking about our facilities, not only
14 yours, but other facilities which we have in the
15 Commonwealth owned by the Commonwealth, and specifically for
16 the profoundly disabled, either mentally or physically, or
17 in some cases, both. And there is a significant percentage
18 of your population that is considered mentally disabled.

19 Is there any work going on between DOC and
20 Human Services in which maybe transfers can be made from
21 your facilities to these existing, five existing -- well,
22 four and a half existing facilities for disabled?

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: If you're talking about
24 seriously mental ill individuals, we don't have a -- we have
25 our own licensed mental health beds. We don't have the

1 ability to transfer them into Department of Human Services.
2 And frankly, they are struggling with capacity with just
3 their county jail for that.

4 As far as the physically ADA, we have
5 facilities that are ADA compliant. And we have the ability
6 to house people at a place that's consistent with their
7 disability.

8 CHAIRMAN DUNN: Just to give a little added
9 on to that. We do have, within the Parole Board, where we
10 have, because of the forensic unit at Walmart and I believe
11 now at Retreat, we have committees that work.

12 I mean, there's no, like, formal thing going
13 on, but we have these committees that work to try to get
14 home plans that work, not just with the, say, Norristown and
15 Torrents, but just as importantly, with the counties for --
16 where we see that there's a seriously mentally ill
17 individual, but they seem that they would be better off not
18 being in a correctional institution, but being in some kind
19 of other setting, whether it be Torrents, a group home,
20 whatever it is. We actually try to work through Department
21 of Human Services and the counties to figure out how to do
22 that. Not a whole lot of placements every year, but there
23 are a few that we kind of are able to move that way, and we
24 actually have a board member, Mark Cock, who kind of heads
25 that up for us.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Representative
2 Markosek.

3 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Chairman Saylor
4 was talking about the purchasing of -- and he mentioned
5 saws. I hope there's no wire cutters lying around in here.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: You and me both.

7 MINORITY CHAIRMAN MARKOSEK: Thank you. You
8 did a good job. Thanks.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: Commissioner and
10 Chairman, I appreciate your time here today.

11 And I want to remind you to please keep
12 Sergeant Mark Baserman's family in your thoughts and
13 prayers, very tragic thing.

14 And you know, Commissioner, to the staff and
15 everybody else, we continue to send our thoughts and best
16 wishes to the rest of your employees and their families.

17 With that --

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: I appreciate you
19 recognizing that in the beginning of the hearing. We
20 appreciate it.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SAYLOR: And we do
22 recognize, in the general assembly, that there are very
23 dangerous jobs and positions. I've had an opportunity to
24 visit Graterford and Camp Hill and a few others over the
25 years. So I understand.

1 With that, we will reconvene at one o'clock
2 to hear from Secretary of Administration, Secretary Minnich.

3 Thank you.

4 (Hearing concluded at 12:01 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I hereby certify that the proceedings are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the within proceedings, and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

Summer A. Miller, Court Reporter
Notary Public