



**Testimony to the Pennsylvania House Judiciary Committee
Anna McCauslin, Deputy State Director, Americans for Prosperity – Pennsylvania**

Monday, June 17, 2019

Chairman Kauffman and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Anna McCauslin and I am the Deputy State Director of Americans for Prosperity in Pennsylvania. Americans for Prosperity is the state's largest grassroots organization focused on long-term solutions to country's biggest problems. I urge you to **support Senate Bills 500, 501, and 502**, which are part of a larger justice reform package that will help keep our communities safer while easing burdens on taxpayers.

SB 500, 501, and 502 will support the successful implementation of reforms to our probation and parole system as well as better providing for the restoration of victims of crime. With the second-highest percentage of its citizens on probation and parole in the country and the highest incarceration rate in the Northeast, the Keystone State cannot delay these reforms.

We believe that every person has the ability to do extraordinary things. However, to the detriment of the person, their community and society as a whole, some individuals have barriers in their lives that keep them from realizing their full potential. When people make poor choices, they should own up to them and pay the fine or do the time. However, we should not make it more difficult for them to move on with their lives.

A key part of reducing Pennsylvania's overincarceration epidemic is ensuring that our parole and probation system are more effective at setting our citizens up for successful re-entry. In 2016, over half of state prison admissions were for probation and parole revocations as opposed to new crimes. This is an appalling failure rate—Pennsylvania needs to critically evaluate how it spends its community corrections resources and better tailor its parole and probation policies to provide maximum support to those at highest risk of recidivism who need the most support to achieve the maximum effectiveness from the limited resources available. The reforms in this package are an important step in that direction.

SB 501 will make Pennsylvania's community supervision system more effective by expanding the use of risk-and-needs assessments to better individualize the supervision and resources directed towards individual parolees and probationers. Not everyone on probation or parole needs the same level of supervision, particularly at different points of the process. Our communities are safer and our taxpayers better off, when parole and probation officers can concentrate on those in need of the greatest supervision to successfully complete their supervision. Using risk-and-needs assessments to better tailor individual supervision conditions makes the best use of our resources to help the most parolees and probationers succeed and restart their lives. SB 501 directs an evaluation of the effectiveness of various types of sanctions for violations of supervision conditions while also increasing opportunities for drug treatment programs for those who need treatment rather than additional incarceration. Along with SB 500, SB 501's expanded data collection and evaluation will help Pennsylvania approach its high community supervision rates with evidence-based solutions to ensure our state adopting a smart-on-crime, soft-on-taxpayer approach.

SB 500 creates the County Adult Probation and Parole Advisory Committee, which will oversee grants to implement probation and parole reforms. The advisory committee SB 500 creates will issue grants to help counties implement holistic community supervision programs to serve the more than a quarter million Pennsylvanians on parole or probation. The advisory committee will assist counties in developing funding formulas and program plans to effectively implement the reforms of SB 501. The committee will also place higher grant priority towards counties with larger numbers of high risk-and-needs individuals. In addition to helping implement effective community supervision reforms. The committee will report community supervision data and analyze long-term trends to build an evidence base for spreading best practices. Finally, the committee will calculate the cost-savings generated through these practices and direct their partial reinvestment in continued recidivism reduction programs. Partial reinvestment of the savings that probation and parole reforms create is essential to continue to reduce recidivism and crime over the long-term—supporting this effort through SB 500 is essential.

SB 502 expands services to help ensure victims of crime are supported and made whole—something Americans for Prosperity recognizes as an important component of an effective criminal justice system. The bill increases the time period a crime victim can file for compensation from two to three years and clarifies eligibility rules so that victims can apply as long as they report crimes within 72 hours of their discovery, not merely their commission. The bill also expands the scope of people affected by crime who can pursue compensation, such as those who lose financial support due to the death of another crime victim to apply. The bill also helps crime victims stay informed about the release of perpetrators. SB 502 also covers expenses that no crime victim should be burdened with on top of the emotional toll of recovery—these

include financial support for counseling to minors who are victims of sexual assault and helping relatives of victims of homicide cover funeral expenses.

A well-functioning criminal justice system should restore those who have been wronged by crime. It should also give the 95% of those serving sentences who will return to society the best possible opportunities to rehabilitate themselves, contribute to their communities, and reach their full potential. By tackling probation, parole, and victim's restoration, Senate Bills 500, 501, and 502 comprise a comprehensive component of the essential continuation of Pennsylvania's Justice Reinvestment efforts. In the interests of supporting victims, keeping our communities safer through lower recidivism, and helping more former inmates turn their lives around I respectfully urge you to support Senate Bills 500, 501, and 502.

Sincerely,

Anna McCauslin
Deputy State Director
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