



PENNSYLVANIA
PRISON SOCIETY
justice & compassion

June 14, 2019

The Honorable Rob Kaufman
House Judiciary Chairman
312 Main Capitol Building
PO Box 202089
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Justice Reinvestment II, SB 500 and SB 501

Chairman Kaufman and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

The Pennsylvania Prison Society supports SB 500 and 501 which enhance public safety by eliminating inefficiencies in Pennsylvania's criminal justice process and correcting deficiencies in state financial support to county probation and parole.

Justice Reinvestment Enhances Public Safety.

While we often think of prison, probation, and parole as tools for ensuring public safety, when these tools are wielded too broadly, the public's safety is put at risk.

Experiencing incarceration actually increases a person's likelihood of committing future crime – and that makes sense; being deprived of liberty, taken away from family, community, and eliminating prospects of employment takes a toll on an individual's ability to achieve stability.

Likewise, being under supervision from a probation or parole agent, which usually includes restrictions on travel and association, fees, and requirements which the average adult does not follow (e.g. refraining from alcohol, checking in with an agent) hampers the ability of a person to rehabilitate themselves.

This package of legislation removes bureaucratic inefficiencies that currently result in:

- **underutilization of Pennsylvania's array of alternatives to incarceration;**
and
- **individuals who do not pose a risk to public safety remaining incarcerated past their sentence minimum.**

In addition, these bills enable county probation and parole to be more targeted and helpful in their approaches.

While prison, probation, and parole may be necessary when someone is a serious threat to public safety, depriving or restricting a citizen of liberty should only be undertaken when truly needed. Unfortunately, in Pennsylvania today our cumbersome criminal justice laws, developed piecemeal over time, often lead to overutilization of prison and parole – harming those Pennsylvanians caught in the system, putting our communities at greater risk of crime, and wasting taxpayer dollars.

SB 500 and 501 are steps toward correcting these problems.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Claire Shubik-Richards
Executive Director

