



House Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing on Justice Reinvestment Initiative -- SB 500, SB 501, SB 502
Monday, June 17, 2019

Testimony of
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Thank you, Chairman Kauffman, Chairman Briggs and members of the House Judiciary Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony to you on behalf of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) on the package of Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) bills.

Created by Act 274 of 1978, PCCD is an administrative commission of the Governor's Executive Offices. Our 48-member Commission board consists of members of the General Assembly, cabinet secretaries from other criminal justice-related state agencies, judges, county commissioners, district attorneys, victim advocates, juvenile justice administrators, researchers and others within the field. Our mission is to enhance the quality, coordination and planning within the criminal and juvenile justice systems; to facilitate the delivery of services to victims of crime; and to increase the safety of our communities.¹

Our history with JRI has been quite extensive. Back in 2011, PCCD assisted in Pennsylvania's first foray into employing a data-driven JRI approach to reduce corrections spending and reinvest a portion of the savings generated in strategies to increase public safety. At that time, the Commonwealth was facing a massive state prison population projection, which would have necessitated a new prison being built each year to safely house the population. Using funding from the Pew Center on the States and the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance and technical assistance from the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, a bi-partisan, inter-branch task force was created to delve into the Commonwealth's criminal justice data and develop policy recommendations and legislation to achieve these goals. Acts 122 and 196 of 2012 were subsequently passed to implement these recommendations and redirect savings to be reinvested in supporting victims' services, local law enforcement, county probation and parole and other programs and services.

Based on our positive experiences from the first round of JRI, PCCD assisted again in bringing Pew and CSG to Pennsylvania in 2016 to participate in a Phase II JRI process. Again, a similar task force was formed to review our state's criminal justice data and make legislative and policy recommendations to improve our system. The final report was adopted by the Task Force in December 2016, and the legislative packet that you see before you is the product of that report. Information on the JRI2 process can be found on our website (www.pccd.pa.gov) if you are interested in learning more about both JRI efforts.

¹Our agency's main functions are: 1) the administration of millions in federal and state dollars in grants to state and local criminal justice and juvenile justice agencies, victim service providers including children's advocacy centers, non-profit service providers, and schools; 2) the training and certification of sheriffs, deputy sheriffs and constables; and 3) administering the state's victim's compensation program.

As for the legislative proposals before you, PCCD strongly supports SB 500's creation of a new County Adult Probation and Parole Advisory Committee to provide direction on probation and parole funding, planning and recommendations for best practices. The advisory committee process has been well-established and very successful in our agency's work model. It has been invaluable for bringing appropriate stakeholders to the table, allowing for robust cross-system discussions and policy development. Further, we already have extensive relations with our county criminal justice partners through our county criminal justice advisory boards structure and funding streams (e.g., county intermediate punishment). An advisory committee makes the most sense to coordinate county probation and parole efforts throughout the Commonwealth.

PCCD also supports the provisions of SB 501 which reclassify county intermediate punishment (CIP) as an option under probation, which should encourage its greater use by counties. CIP is a state-funded diversionary sentence for individuals convicted of offenses that would otherwise result in partial or total confinement in a county correctional facility. Our agency has conducted recidivism research on CIP, and has found that individuals diverted into CIP with a drug and alcohol restrictive intermediate punishment component had a better three-year recidivism rate (25.7%) when compared to a similar state prison control group (34.9%). Since CIP is a cheaper alternative to incarceration, and it has measurably better recidivism outcomes than prison, we encourage its use by counties -- particularly as a means to divert non-violent offenders to appropriate substance abuse and/or mental health treatment services.

The amendments to the Crime Victims Act in SB 502, which were drafted in consultation with the Office of the Victim Advocate, are also strongly supported by our agency. PCCD is tasked with administering the state's victim's compensation program, which provides financial support to victims after a crime occurs for a wide range of services, such as counseling, funeral costs, medical care costs, cleaning of the crime scene, etc. The amendments to the compensation program in SB 502 are designed to reduce bureaucratic red tape that our Office of Victims Services has historically noted hinder our ability to assist victims.

Further, SB 502 amends law enforcement's responsibility to provide basic information on the rights and services available to victims as soon as an officer has first contact with the victim or as soon as reasonably possible. The sooner we can get information to a victim about the services that available to assist them, the better.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment on these bills. I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me at this time.