

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1217 Session of  
1995

INTRODUCED BY RICHARDSON, KUKOVICH, BELARDI, TRELLO, CARN,  
MIHALICH, JOSEPHS AND ROBINSON, MARCH 16, 1995

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, MARCH 16, 1995

AN ACT

1 Establishing citizen advisory boards within each region of the  
2 Department of Corrections and providing for their powers and  
3 duties.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Definitions.

7 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
8 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
9 context clearly indicates otherwise:

10 "Advisory board" or "board." A citizen advisory board  
11 established under this act.

12 "Department." The Department of Corrections of the  
13 Commonwealth.

14 Section 2. Establishment of boards.

15 (a) Establishment and composition.--

16 (1) There shall be a citizen advisory board established  
17 in each region of the department.

18 (2) Each board shall consist of 15 members, to be

recommended by the members of the General Assembly and  
appointed by the Governor, as follows:

(i) Three members who are representatives of the  
general public, of whom two are victims of a violent  
crime.

(ii) A presiding judge of a court of common pleas.

(iii) A district attorney.

(iv) A law enforcement professional.

(v) An employee of the department.

(vi) Two criminal defense attorneys, of whom one  
provides public counsel services.

(vii) Two members from inmate advocate  
organizations.

(viii) Two inmate family members.

(ix) A former inmate.

(x) A cleric or representative from a community  
church or synagogue.

(3) Each board shall be an autonomous entity,  
independent of the department.

#### Section 3. Terms, quorum, etc.

The advisory board members shall be appointed for terms of  
three years each, and no member shall serve more than two  
consecutive terms. A chairperson shall be appointed by the board  
members of each advisory board. A majority of the board shall  
constitute a quorum for any meeting. Advisory board members  
shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for  
actual and reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of  
their duties.

#### Section 4. Meetings, etc.

Each advisory board shall meet monthly, or additionally as

1 needed, and upon the request of two or more members of the  
2 board. Each board may appoint a clerk. An inmate in each  
3 facility shall be chosen from inmate applicants by the advisory  
4 board as a liaison to the board. The department shall provide  
5 each board with adequate space in which to hold its meetings.

6 Section 5. Powers and duties.

7 Advisory board duties shall consist of the following:

8 (1) To investigate and report on the general state of  
9 correctional facilities, their administration, correction  
10 policy and practices and the treatment of prisoners therein.

11 (2) To investigate and report on the health and safety  
12 of prisoners, the availability of education, vocational,  
13 employment and rehabilitation programs, the availability of  
14 proper medical, psychiatric and counseling services and the  
15 availability of healthy and nutritious meals.

16 (3) To investigate and report on the sufficiency and  
17 availability of regular visiting hours, telephones, religious  
18 clergy and attorneys, on the treatment of visiting family,  
19 friends, attorneys and program volunteers and on the  
20 availability of transportation for visiting family members.

21 (4) To advise and inform the community at large of  
22 current needs and trends in department policies and  
23 practices.

24 (5) To advise the department on implementation,  
25 improvements and general modifications to policies and  
26 practices relative to prisoner education, vocation,  
27 employment and rehabilitation programs, visitation, medical,  
28 psychiatric and counseling services and religious and  
29 volunteer programs.

30 Section 6. Reports.

1 Reports shall be issued monthly and shall be sent first to  
2 the department for comment. Fifteen days later, the report,  
3 along with any department comments, shall be sent to the  
4 region's legislators and to the Governor.

5 Section 7. Access to institutions.

6 In order to perform its duties, an advisory board shall have  
7 access to all correctional institutions in its region, and all  
8 areas therein, at any time and without notice unless the safety  
9 of board members would be endangered due to an institutional  
10 emergency.

11 Section 8. Meetings with inmates.

12 Board members may, at the request of any inmate, meet with  
13 that inmate within the institution and endeavor to assist with  
14 problems of a personal nature in relation to the institution.  
15 The board shall be allowed to meet with inmates out of sight and  
16 hearing of any officer or employee of the institution if the  
17 board so requests.

18 Section 9. Access to records.

19 An advisory board shall, with the permission of an inmate,  
20 have access to any and all of the inmate's records, including,  
21 but not limited to, records of conviction, probation, parole,  
22 discipline, grievance, administration and classification,  
23 provided, however, that the board shall not disseminate the  
24 files or any information therein.

25 Section 10. Effective date.

26 This act shall take effect in 60 days.