

The Honorable  
PA State Senator  
State Capitol Address  
(find on <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/>)

RE: Senate Bill 1161 Pre-release Procedures for Short Minimum Sentences

Dear Senator XXXX:

I am asking your support for SB 1161, allowing for the transfer of a state inmate to a pre-release center provided that he or she is within 18 months of completion of his or her minimum sentence and no outstanding detainers exist. At the center, the inmate can take any program that is consistent with the pre-release plan.

As you no doubt know, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections is dangerously overcrowded holding over 51,000 inmates in prisons with a capacity of only 43,376. Projections are that in five years, the population will be 60,000 with capacity only reaching 51,000 as we can't build fast enough. And half of these offenders are nonviolent and would be better served with shorter sentences and more treatment for the root causes of their crimes.

Many pre-release centers remain at least half empty. We encourage the DOC to review the existing beds using as many as are available for treatment programs according to DOC plans and to encourage reintegration into the community. Why are we not using the resources in our state instead of transferring 2000 inmates out of state?

Please encourage sentencing courts and the DOC to allow more offenders into the Recidivism Risk Reduction Incentive (RRRI) program so they can be encouraged to show good conduct to participate and successfully complete treatment and counseling, the original intent of RRRI.

The time has come to seriously change the course of direction of our state. With over 90% of offenders coming back to our neighborhoods, why are we not focusing efforts into safe and successful reintegration instead of long periods of incarceration that are inefficient and ineffective, particularly for nonviolent offenders?

Thank you for your support of SB 1161.

Sincerely,