

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

RE: Senate Bill 1145 Alternative Sentencing Guidelines Based on Risk and Needs Assessment

Dear Senator XXXX:

I am requesting your support for SB 1145 that would provide guidelines to judges to identify nonviolent offenders who could best benefit from alternative sentencing programs.

SB 1145 requires the use of guidelines by the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing that can assess needs and risk of offenders to determine if they have the capacity to commit more serious crime. Other states have lowered their prison population and rate of crime by using just these targeted methods of treatment and training as sentencing alternatives.

An appalling number of offenders are being sentenced to longer prison sentences, thereby leading to overcrowded conditions that do little to rehabilitate. The state prisons hold over 51,000 inmates in facilities only designed to have a maximum capacity of 43,376. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections must send 2000 offenders to other states as they can't build prisons fast enough. Offenders need treatment programs that will reduce the rate of return and provide the tools necessary to integrate successfully upon release.

More focus should be spent on rehabilitating offenders and not just on punishment that has been ineffective and expensive, taking monies away from proven programs that will prevent crime. With Corrections the third largest allocation in our state budget and growing, we need to be "smarter on crime". Offenders can be placed such alternative programs as Recidivism Risk Reduction Incentive (RRRI), or county or state intermediate punishment (CIP or SIP). With over 60 percent of the prison population identified as having substance abuse and half without a high school diploma and a lack of job skills, we need to be wiser about how we're spending our money.

Over 90 % of offenders will be returning to our communities. So, how do we increase public safety more efficiently? We can continue to build more prisons at a cost of \$200 million each that house offenders for over \$34,000 per year each. Or, we can change our direction to successful reintegration of ex-offenders at significantly lower cost of parole supervision of \$3000 each currently.

Thank you for your support of SB 1145.

Sincerely,