

Having just learned today about the public hearing scheduled for April 1, 2014, I am interested in the progress of SB 979 or other reasonable alternatives that would accomplish its goals and more. Unfortunately, due to the late notice and my Court having scheduled sentencing hearings for that date I do not know if I can attend.

As the public defender in Greene County, Pennsylvania with a staff of 1 and ½ attorneys, I am interested in the development of the Public Defender Association of Pennsylvania with a companion educational institute similar to the relationship of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association to its affiliate Pennsylvania District Attorneys Institute. SB979 is one way to address the issue of training and education for public defenders, but does not address the funding of the Public Defender Association of Pennsylvania which has a statutorily limited dues and budget structure 1/10th of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association and public defender educational programs with a budget 1/20th of the District Attorneys Institute.

Also, SB 979 does not address the problems of small county public defender offices. I am also interested in the disparity in direct funding that is provided to counties for the support of prosecution and defense resources, namely the funding of the District Attorneys' offices which include (1) the 60% of the full time district attorney salary paid for out of fines and costs collected from public defender clients, (2) funds for victim witness offices, domestic violence, and support collection, and (3) the availability of the investigative resources of the Pennsylvania and local police, forensic laboratories, and their trained experts. Compare that with the situation where the whole burden of the public defender office is borne by the county taxpayer with zero funding from the state except perhaps some juvenile grant money.

SB 979 is a bill which in principle a public defender must support. Open minds should also be willing to explore other ways to accomplish the goals of education and training with existing structures and collaborative efforts, enhanced funding for the statewide public defender association, and some a bit of relief to the taxpayer of the burden of the public defender office similar to that offered to the District Attorney offices.

Sincerely,

Harry J. Cancelmi, Esquire
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Snively, Pat

From: Warner, Gregg
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2014 11:40 AM
To: Snively, Pat
Subject: FW: Senate Judiciary Committee public hearing
Attachments: SB979witnesses.docx

From: Harry Cancelmi [mailto:hcancelmi@co.greene.pa.us]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2014 9:26 PM
To: Warner, Gregg
Subject: FW: Senate Judiciary Committee public hearing

Dear Mr. Warner:

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