



Testimony to the Pennsylvania Judiciary Committee in support of Senate Bill 14

June 24th, 2019

Chairwoman Baker and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Anna McCauslin and I am the Deputy State Director of Americans for Prosperity in Pennsylvania. Americans for Prosperity is the state's largest grassroots organization focused on long-term solutions to the country's biggest problems. On behalf of thousands of activists across Pennsylvania, I urge you to **support Senate Bill 14**, which will bring needed reforms to our state's parole and probation system.

Pennsylvania's flawed community supervision system is a key driver of overincarceration in our state—last year, according to a recent report from the Council on State Governments' Justice Center, over 54 percent of Pennsylvania prison admissions were for probation and parole violations.

Our community supervision system needs to do a better job at setting up probationers for success. Our failure to do so makes communities less safe, wastes human potential, and costs taxpayers dearly. Pennsylvania spends \$334 million annually on incarceration from parole and probation violations, more than the entire proposed 2020 budget for the State Police. \$101 million of this spending comes from technical violations—activities such as breaking a curfew or missing a meeting with a probation officer that aren't crimes themselves but can result in re-incarceration.

S.B. 14 is a step in the right direction to address Pennsylvania's community supervision pitfalls. It will order the creation of guidelines for graduated sanctions for probation violations, helping give probation officers more flexibility to help those under supervision succeed without needlessly resorting to reincarceration. The bill also prohibits consecutive probation sentences and caps maximum supervision lengths so that people do not remain under community control for excessive periods of time that don't improve public safety. In addressing violations, the bill institutes an important presumption that extra conditions of supervision or treatment should be considered before resorting to reincarceration. Finally, S.B. 14 incentivizes good behavior by providing the opportunity for those who fulfill all their conditions to terminate probation early after a year and a half, the highest risk period for recidivism.

Americans for Prosperity believes in breaking barriers that stand in the way of people realizing their full potential. Pursuing a more sensible probation policy will give former prisoners a better shot success after their incarceration, making our communities safer, improving lives, and easing taxpayer burdens in the process.

For these reasons I respectfully ask you to **vote yes in support of Senate Bill 14.**

Sincerely,

Anna McCauslin
Deputy State Director
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