



THE
AMERICAN
CONSERVATIVE
UNION
FOUNDATION



**RIGHT
ON CRIME**



June 7, 2017

Dear Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly:

As a coalition of public policy groups with a conservative approach to criminal justice issues, we are writing in support of policies contained in Pennsylvania's justice reinvestment (JRI) policy framework, which is being considered by the General Assembly. The proposal embodies the conservative policy principles that should guide Pennsylvania's criminal justice system: improving public safety, strengthening proportional accountability for those who commit crime, respecting the dignity and value of human life, fostering rehabilitation, maximizing return on taxpayer dollars, and meeting the needs of victims.

Pennsylvania has the highest incarceration rate in the Northeast, with a state prison population of more than 50,000 . The annual cost of incarceration has sharply risen from \$1.6 billion in FY2006 to \$2.4 billion in FY2015. Recidivism accounts for a portion of this cost, with nearly one-third of prison beds occupied by people who have violated the terms of their probation or parole.

Pennsylvania's JRI policy framework hopes to reduce costly parole release delays by moving those who have committed lower-level, non-violent crimes out of prisons and holding them accountable using community supervision tools and programs that reduce recidivism. Costly prison beds can thus be reserved for those who pose a threat to society. The resources freed up in this manner can then be re-purposed for constructive programming to reduce recidivism, strengthen community supervision, and better hold accountable those who commit serious and violent offenses. The more efficient and effective approach found in the JRI proposal is projected to avert an estimated \$92 million in costs, while safely reducing the prison population over the next five years.

The JRI proposals are the product of ten months of intensive study by the Justice Reinvestment Working Group, a bipartisan, inter-branch group of state and local leaders tasked with analyzing Pennsylvania's sentencing and corrections data, studying evidence-based criminal justice policies, and developing a package of smart-on-crime reforms. A majority of other states

including Kentucky, North Carolina, and South Carolina have already enacted recommendations from similar working groups, and are seeing positive results.

As conservatives, we support reforms that hold those who commit crime accountable for their actions, and at the same time, prioritize public safety. Pouring billions of dollars into a system that fails to prepare those who are incarcerated to be law-abiding citizens upon their release is not acceptable. If the results of justice reinvestment in other states are any measure, there is little doubt that Pennsylvania is on the right track. As such, we encourage you and your colleagues to give serious consideration to the JRI policy proposals. Doing so will benefit taxpayers, families, victims, and communities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

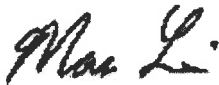
Sincerely,



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Grover G. Norquist
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