



June 25, 2020

The Honorable Joseph Scarnati
President Pro Tempore
The Pennsylvania Senate
292 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3025

Dear President Scarnati:

As you are aware, Pennsylvania has the 9th highest probation rate in the country. Given that the per capita cost of probation is \$3,500 per year, any reform of state probation will result in significant savings for the taxpayers.

We write in support of reforming Pennsylvania's probation system. Senate Bill 14 would provide the structure for a more effective community supervision system in the Commonwealth - one that holds individuals under supervision accountable while offering an achievable path to rehabilitation and redemption.

Some of the key provisions in Senate Bill 14 include:

Mandatory Review Conferences: Requiring a mandatory review will ensure that individuals do not remain on probation without a proper review of their history and achievements.

Incentivizing Good Behavior and Accountability: The legislation would reward individuals who have taken positive steps related to education and employment, as well as those who remain free of technical violations.

Soft Caps on Probation: The language would create a presumption that probation should be terminated after five years for felonies and three years for misdemeanors, unless the individual under supervision fails to meet the conditions of his/her sentence or engages in improper conduct. The amendment also includes a transparency provision requiring citizens to receive written notification of the court's findings if probation is not terminated. This simple concept permits an individual to understand areas that need improvement, thus creating a viable pathway to termination of probation.

Graduated and Proportional Sanctions for Technical Violations: It is important to hold people accountable for failing to meet the conditions of their probation. However, automatically incarcerating people, even for minor rules violations, is often inappropriate. The Amendment would ensure that those who have so-called “technical violations,” face more proportionate consequences for their conduct.

This legislation strikes a balanced approach by increasing accountability and transparency while helping people under community supervision improve themselves and succeed. By taking this smart approach, Pennsylvania can increase the effectiveness of its probation program. At the same time, it can reduce costs significantly, which is vitally important, given the current economic climate in the Commonwealth.

We would like to express our gratitude to Senator Baker and Executive Director Mike Cortez for encouraging interested organizations to provide input throughout this process. Senators Bartolotta and Williams and their staff also deserve recognition for raising awareness on this important issue.

Respectfully,



David Safavian, Esq.
General Counsel
American Conservative Union



Patrick Purtill
Director of Legislative Affairs
Faith and Freedom Coalition



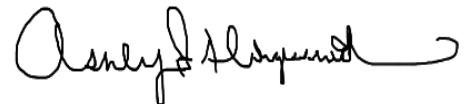
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R Street



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Marc Levin
Chief of Policy and Innovation
Right on Crime

Cc: The Honorable Jake Corman
Pennsylvania Senate Republican Caucus
Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Caucus