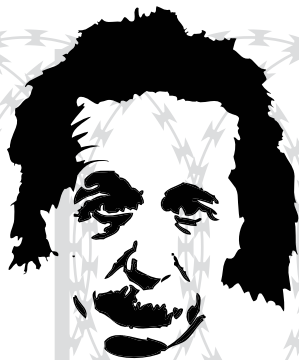


# REAL CORRECTIONS REFORM RIGHT NOW



**Albert Einstein** is said to have remarked that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. We the undersigned submit that unfortunately, that same definition could be applied to Pennsylvania's current criminal justice policies. What we have been doing is locking more and more people up for longer and longer and spending more and more money. **The facts are clear:**



Pennsylvania's per capita incarceration rate has **exploded by more than 500% since 1980**, requiring the construction of 18 new prisons—with more on the way, **each costing \$200 million** to build—and has not decreased in recent years as many other states have.



As a result, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections' budget has **skyrocketed since 1980** and is now the third largest of all state agencies.



The best research to date indicates that while imprisonment keeps offenders from committing crimes while in prison, it does not make them less likely to commit crimes after release, and may even **make them more likely to do so**.



Several states have been able to significantly reduce both their crime rate and imprisonment rate over the past decade, demonstrating that prison populations can be significantly reduced **without compromising public safety and improving outcomes**.

We therefore urge the Governor and General Assembly to adopt proven public policies that have worked in other states to reduce both crime and waste. Specifically, it is our goal to spearhead the adoption of policies that **(a) will prove transformative** and **(b) are actually achievable in the near term**. The situation is far too serious to focus on solutions that will not dramatically change the status quo or to expend effort on the unachievable.



# TRANSFORMATIVE & ACHIEVABLE CORRECTIONS POLICY CHANGES

**Improve Current System Operations.** Tighten up DOC assessment process and how program assignments are made, so as to adhere to the “risk/needs principle” of targeting limited resources to those most at risk of reoffending and in most need of services. The moniker here is that “treatment for all means real treatment for few.” Improve DOC Community Corrections Center (CCC) operations. A top-to-bottom evaluation of the CCC system by Univ. of Cincinnati found that those who didn’t transition through a CCC on their way out of prison actually did better than those who did. Tighten up the process of parole hearings and of the release process so as not to hold offenders in prison any longer than necessary simply due to operational inefficiencies. For instance, right now an offender serves an additional 101 days in prison on average after he/she has been granted a positive parole decision.

**Front-end Actuarial Risk Assessment.** Implementing such assessments into the sentencing process in order to sort out high risk cases that need to be in state prison vs. lower risk cases that may be better managed in alternative diversionary options outside of prison. Virginia is a good example of a state that has used risk assessment at sentencing to transform their system.

**Problem-Solving Courts.** Drug courts are a proven alternative to incarceration for low-level drug offenders, demonstrating significant reductions in recidivism. Drug courts offer intensive judicial oversight of offenders combined with mandatory drug testing and escalating sanctions for failure to comply. Other promising problem-solving court models include Mental Health Courts, DUI Courts, Reentry Courts, and Veterans Courts.

**HOPE Probation/Parole Supervision.** In Hawaii’s Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (HOPE) model, drug offenders must call a number every morning to see if they have to report to the court to take a drug test. If they fail, they are immediately jailed for a few days and can ultimately be imprisoned for multiple failures. The HOPE model works generally by: 1) providing clear and up-front communication of behavioral expectations, 2) closely monitoring behavioral compliance, and 3) consistently delivering modest sanctions certainly and swiftly for each and every violation. This model has proven (in a randomized, controlled trial) to reduce positive drug screens by more than 70 percent and cut both revocations and new arrests in half.



# TRANSFORMATIVE & ACHIEVABLE CORRECTIONS POLICY CHANGES

**Graduated Sanctions for Probationers and Parolees.** Nationally, a third to a half of prison admissions are individuals revoked from probation or parole. Using graduated sanctions where each technical violation (not a new crime) is met with a swift and certain response- such as increased reporting, a curfew, or even a shock-night in jail-revocations for technical violations can be reduced. Other options for responding to technical parole violations (TPVs) include using Day Reporting Centers, capping the time that a technical violator can serve in prison at a fixed amount of time, expanding the use of the TPV Centers created by DOC and PBPP in 2010, and creating a bail-like system for those charged with technical violation(s) but awaiting an adjudication hearing in prison.

**Expanded Use of Technology.** Electronic monitoring is an effective alternative for nonviolent offenders. A Florida study found offenders on GPS were 31 percent less likely to return to prison than those not being monitored. Other technological system advancements include developing a statewide integrated offender management system, increasing the use of video-conferencing for parole hearings, developing electronic parole packages, and developing an optimization system for making inmate assignment and transfer decisions.

**Earned Discharge for Probationers/Parolees.** Arizona also enacted legislation that gives probationers good time credit for time served when they fully comply with all terms, such as restitution. By reducing the total number of offenders on probation, there are fewer opportunities for revocations. Empirical evidence can inform how long a probationer/parolee must stay clean in order to pose no greater risk of getting arrested than the average citizen. By ending probation/parole supervision at this “redemption” point, resources such as agent time can be re-focused on the front end of supervision which is the highest risk period for probationers/parolees.

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## LIST OF SIGNATORIES

**Hon. George M. Leader,** Former Governor

**Andrew Barnes,** Director of Victim Services, Pennsylvania Office of the Victim Advocate

**Mark Bergstrom,** Executive Director, Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing

**Matthew J. Brouillette,** President & CEO, Commonwealth Foundation

**Cynthia L. Daub,** Deputy Executive Director, Office of Probation and Parole

**William DiMascio,** Executive Director, The Prison Society

**Michael Geer,** President, Pennsylvania Family Institute

**Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.,** Former Mayor of Philadelphia

**Jane Leader Janeczek,** Director of Special Projects, Country Meadows Retirement Communities

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**Dr. Kiminori Nakamura,** Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Maryland

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**Hon. Ernest D. Preate, Jr.,** Former Attorney General

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**Hon. Jack Wagner,** Auditor General

**Hon. John Wetzel,** Secretary of Corrections