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TESTIMONY
OF
COMMISSIONER RONALD M. SHARPE
PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE
HOUSE BILL 1141
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Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, the Pennsylvania State Police welcome the opportunity to address this House Judiciary Committee and testify on behalf of House Bill 1141. This is one of the most important issues facing law-enforcement in Pennsylvania today.

The consensus of the law-enforcement community is that the law prohibiting against the collection of intelligence, investigative and treatment information in any automated criminal justice information system must be amended to permit criminal justice agencies to take advantage of contemporary computer technology. This prohibition, it should be observed, does not prohibit criminal justice agencies from collecting and sharing such information; it merely prohibits them from collecting and sharing it efficiently by an automated means. It should also be noted that Pennsylvania is the only state that does not permit the use of computers to collect intelligence, investigative and treatment information.

Criminal offenders will generally carry out their acts in a repetitive manner and style. Therefore, an analysis must be conducted to identify the manner in which the crime or set of crimes, was committed, a comparison of the crime with similar crimes and comparison of the crime(s) with the modus operandi or "style" of known offenders. Under the current system, we are not able to accomplish such effective analysis. This can only be realized through automation.

In Pennsylvania, having only the make and color of a car as a

"lead" in a drive-by shooting will most likely result in a case remaining unsolved. However, in other states this meager information can be sufficient for investigation and prosecution. For example, in a recent drive by shooting in California, detectives with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department turned to their recently computerized crime report database to search for previous criminal activity involving a car of known make and color. One of their officers prepared a field report on a similar vehicle about three months earlier. The search of the database provided detectives with a plate number from the previous report which allowed them to trace the car to an East Los Angeles address. The offender was apprehended and the weapon confiscated. How would that case have been handled in Pennsylvania? The information would be reported and filed within the investigating agency. The investigator and the reviewing supervisor would rely on memorization and the cumbersome process of reviewing extensive typed or handwritten reports searching for a common denominator. More than likely, the officer trying to obtain information would become frustrated and the crime would go unsolved. The reported information would probably be forgotten because it would be too difficult to access.

Cases such as the disappearance of Cherrie Mahan who was allegedly abducted from a schoolbus stop in Butler county provides a perfect example of the enormous amount of information collected during an investigation for the need of computerization of the

information. ***** The Pennsylvania State Police investigative report on this case already encompasses over 3200 pages of information regarding possible leads as to her whereabouts. Computerization would allow for instant access to investigative information contained within this report. Analysis of this information would take a computer only several seconds as compared to the hundreds of hours necessary to manually accomplish the same task.

On a national level, we have the case of Theodore Robert Bundy, with whom this committee is probably familiar. This is a man who over a span of four years and five states was suspected of brutally murdering 36 women. In July 1979, Ted Bundy was sentenced to the electric chair for the savage sex-slaying of two Florida coeds, and was recently executed. However, what is interesting about this case is that law enforcement agencies failed to exchange information which could have been very helpful and would have brought Bundy to justice much faster.

Bundy had numerous jobs with law enforcement, beginning with the state Crime Prevention Commission followed by a contract with a municipality in the State of Washington to study recidivism among criminal offenders. Bundy's specific duties were to study recidivism rates among offenders in a local prison. Bundy knew how disorganized the system was in keeping track of crimes and criminals. He was very familiar with how poorly information was

exchanged between police jurisdictions, and had many conversations with members of the law enforcement community about this. He knew about the problems criminal justice agencies had with sharing information about sexual assaults on women. He knew that if one agency possessed information about a sexual assault, they often wouldn't contact adjoining police agencies about that assault, and there was no easy way to share and analyze the information.

Because Bundy knew that exchange of information between police agencies was so bad and because law enforcement agencies did not exchange and coordinate information with other agencies about Bundy's crime when they first occurred, Bundy was able to commit numerous vicious murders over a period of several years.

The same problems Bundy knew about are present today in Pennsylvania. In fact, the analysis and sharing of information in this state is at a critical juncture because we cannot computerize important criminal data. Presently, we have a criminal personality profiler within the State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation, who has been trained by the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime. His job is to assess major cases, such as serial murders or complex drug investigations, and analyze the criminal behavior of the suspects who commit these acts. Our profiler requires approximately 100 hours to profile or complete an assessment on a criminal justice investigation. In 1990 alone, he has been asked to analyze in excess of 100 homicides, and that is

only one category of the crimes he reviews. As you might imagine the number of requests in this area far exceed the time available to assist investigators. If we were permitted to computerize this information, we would have a much better chance to solve the violent crime that occurs in Pennsylvania approximately every 11 minutes.

The preclusion of the use of computer technology in this area also impedes the efficient sharing of information throughout the criminal justice community. The current options available to investigating agencies in Pennsylvania to request and disseminate information on crimes is limited to Uniscope Messages (with the hope interested investigators will see them), Police Information Flyers (of which contents and dissemination is limited) and media and newspaper coverage (in which valuable investigative information is, of course, not included).

In order to analyze criminal investigations effectively, general patterns must be discernable. This is accomplished by entry of generalized search parameters rather than extremely detailed crime reconstructions. Crimes scenes are seldom replicated, however, modus operandi are. It is here that an automated or electronic criminal justice information system and criminal investigations require different levels of specificity. An automated system will take general information on each particular crime entered into the system and search this data

against the same data entered on other crimes looking for similarities and determining if a relationship between two or more cases exists.

Information is an investigator's stock and trade. In today's highly transient society, serial crimes frequently transcend jurisdictional boundaries and an automated or electronic criminal justice information system can play an effective role in identification of relationships between these crimes that may otherwise be perceived as isolated incidents.

I'm here before you today testifying on behalf of a House Bill that will allow law enforcement in Pennsylvania to be more effective in investigation and prosecution of criminal activity.

Nationwide, law enforcement agencies are turning to high-tech hardware and software in a effort to streamline and improve their operations. While police aren't anywhere near taking full advantage of the technology that's available, some jurisdictions are putting these tools to dazzling uses, from optional scanning and digital storage for rapid cross-state transmission to three-dimensional mapping of blood spatter patterns for a more accurate reading of crime scene evidence.

But putting high-tech aside, another major motivation for becoming automated is much more mundane. Frankly, police

departments are buried in paper and mired in increasing caseloads. Managing the vast amounts of attendant data and making that information readily available to law enforcement officials who need it can really be done only by a computer. At the same time, integrated computerization means a more efficient utilization of police manpower and a more effective law enforcement community.

Again, I would like to thank this committee for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this most important legislation. Myself and members of my staff are available for questions.