

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM D. FORD  
CHIEF JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICER OF BUCKS COUNTY  
Before the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
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My name is Bill Ford, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer of Bucks County and I want to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify. The Juvenile Justice System has four key components which are necessary for successful intervention in the prevention of juvenile crime. They are as follows: community, police parents and the Juvenile Court Probation Department.

When a juvenile is arrested for a misdemeanor or felony, he has penetrated the first three components. The Juvenile Court system is the last line of defense that can offer help to prevent further escalation of the problem. After the arrest of the child, the probation department becomes involved in decisions concerning detention or release to parents, intake interview, getting the facts of the arrest plus detailed family information. Scheduling the case for court or handle the case out of court. The pre-sentence investigation or recommendation to the judge for disposition, institutional placement if necessary, supervising the client on probation. The aftercare services upon release, intensive probation service and payment of bills for placement costs.

In providing these functions, the probation department organizes and pulls together the community, police and parents and with a combined effort of all, hopefully changes the direction of the child from a law breaker to a law abiding citizen. The Court, through its probation department, is the heartbeat of the system. By increasing the Grant and Aid through the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, a solid financial base will be established for probation services. These probation services are necessary

and essential to make probation a serious matter and not a joke. Making an individual accountable for his or her actions is the beginning of responsible behavior. By increasing the Grant and Aid, probation departments in those high crime areas of the State will be able to increase staff so that caseloads are manageable and supervision is intensive. With the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission involved, it will monitor the counties to see that services are provided and the increased funding is used appropriately.

As you know, there is currently great disparity between adult and juvenile funding of probation departments - 80% of the adult and 10% of the juvenile is subsidized by the Commonwealth. Some counties have lost juvenile probation staff to the adult system because of the money. To gain control over the juvenile justice expenditures including institution and placement costs, the juvenile probation department must have the financial support. Juveniles can then be maintained without placement and the public can be protected.