

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm David Mohr from Lehigh, Pa. (Carbon Co.), and I am here to offer for your consideration my analysis of HB 239 based on over 20 years working in Penna. Corrections and 16 years as a college lecturer in Criminal Justice and Corrections. My viewpoints are a combination of theory and first hand experience.

After reviewing data for this presentation, I determined that some congratulations are in order for both you as Legislators and also for Penna. Criminal Justice and Corrections in general. The latest FBI Uniform Crime Report (1989) shows Penna. ranking 47th out of 52 States (incl. P.R. & D.C.) in major crime per 100,000 population. That's near the bottom. Also, Penna. is ranked 39th of 51 jurisdictions in rate of imprisonment per 100,000. Not bad. In addition, prison overcrowding has been aggressively addressed in the assembly by the PCCD of a blue-ribbon "Corrections Overcrowding Committee" and the subsequent issuance in March 1990 of their report "Containing Penna. Offenders" which is available in your folder. With your support, some of the 11 recommendations to reduce prison populations to 99% of capacity by 1993 are already being implemented, particularly those addressed to the State Parole Board. The blueprint is there and can work if implemented fully. And finally, you have a model State Parole system that is one of - if not the finest in the Country. The Board is accredited and regularly reaccredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections and administers an aggressive and thorough system of supervising offenders in our communities.

What, then, is wrong in all of this? What is wrong with our current sentencing policy and parole system that we need a HB 239?

My thesis is that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with sentencing and parole in Penna. today and that this legislation is both unnecessary - and potentially dangerous for our communities. This is a classic example of creating a problem - then offering a solution based on false or misleading arguments to support that "solution." Allow me to illustrate how 239 is both unnecessary and potentially dangerous.

(Review of chart "Penna. Corrections: Current vs. Proposed")

You also have to be concerned over the phrase "to be determined by the Department" which appears at least 6 times in 239 (p. 12, lines 6 & 7; p. 19, lines 2 & 3; p. 22, lines 9, 12 & 13, & 15; and p. 23, line 1) and

involves major rules and policies which ought to be more specific. How would you react normally if someone approached you and said "Here, sign this contract; I'll fill in the blanks later."?

In answering the question "Who should screen for parole release and then supervise criminals in our communities - the present Parole Board or the Department of Corrections?", we can make an analogy to you having to call someone to do a plumbing job in your home. Would you call a plumber with 50 years proven experience, or would you call an electrician who tells you "I want to branch out into plumbing; I read a book once."?

Fairness to inmates over community safety. Before you get too mesmerized by the charts and projected data and outside experts you will see and hear in later presentations, please keep in mind the basic question I am posing: Where is the problem?

This Bill does not need to be amended - or rewritten - or tabled. It deserves to be soundly rejected. Let's not recreate the sad experiences of other States that have gone the route of 239. Let's keep doing what is working so well for Pennsylvania.

Thank you.

David C. Mohr
174 Reber St.
Lehighton, Pa. 18235

Education & Experience:

Muhlenberg College, Allentown B.A. (Psychology & Philosophy) 1969
Marywood College, Scranton M.S.W. 1974

16 years lecturing on Criminal Justice, Corrections, Criminal Psychology, and Community Development for Penn State University, Moravian College, and Muhlenberg College.

Board member of Confront/Treatment Trends, Inc., Allentown, Pa. '85 - '88

Trainer for State Parole Board in "Client Management Classification" system.

State Parole and Probation Agent since 1969.