

TESTIMONY PRESENTED
TO
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

By
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President of the Pennsylvania
Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers

January 14th, 1992

Good morning, my name is Thomas Antolik and I'm the current President of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers. I am also the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer for Erie County.

As the President of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, one of my responsibilities is to be the spokes-person for the council. It is in this capacity that I come before you today.

On January 31st, 1991, a group of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers testified before this same committee in support of House Bill Number 24. This bill was targeted to amend the Act of April 9th, 1929, known as the Administrative Code of 1929, and basically stated that:

"A County which employs Probation staff to provide Juvenile Probation services and programs shall receive a grant from the Office of General Counsel through the Juvenile Court Judge's Commission to offset the resulting cost, but only if staff, services and programs meet the qualifications and standards established by the commission. Likewise, a county which employs additional staff for new or improved probation services or programs shall be eligible to receive a grant for the additional cost incurred, but only to the extent that additional staff, services and programs meet the qualifications and standards established by the commission.

For the fiscal year 1991-1992 and thereafter, the principal grant shall provide eighty per centum (80%) of the personnel salary costs incurred by a county to administer Juvenile Probation services pursuant to standards established by the Juvenile Court Judge's Commission. The commission shall establish guidelines for the allocation of these grants.

In addition to these grants, the Juvenile Court Judge's Commission, upon approval of the office of General Counsel and depending on available moneys, shall make grants to political subdivisions to provide training and graduate education of Juvenile Probation Officers, to develop new and innovative Juvenile Justice programming at the local level and to conduct



To further complicate this matter with the Grant-In-Aid being held in budgetary reserve, the Juvenile Probation Departments are facing even more of a dilemma, as existing services may have to be altered.

At our Emergency meeting when I queried the members of the Executive Committee, which represents approximately 17 Counties, four ramifications over the potential loss of the remaining Grant-In-Aid were almost uniformly expressed. They were:

1. Training of Juvenile Probation Officers would have to be put on hold.
2. Drug testing would be curtailed and possibly eliminated.
3. PENNFREE affiliated Specialized Probation Officers would be furloughed.
4. Probation Officers' salaries would be affected, particularly with regards to raises.

I am also certain that the other counties participating in Juvenile Court Judges' Commission Grant-In-Aid Program would not only express the same issues mentioned above but may have some that I'm not even aware of.

What has also made this situation so disheartening, is that the anticipated \$2 million from the General Appropriations Act of 1991 for the state wide reduction in placement days by 5 percent in 1992, is also on hold.

It was our understanding that this additional allocation was to be appropriated and passed on to the counties for the period covering 1-1-92 through 6-30-92. It is safe to say that the majority of the counties had already started planning strategies on how to accomplish this task.

Furthermore, speaking on behalf of those counties, I can with all sincerity state that we felt that the 5 percent reduction requested by the Legislature was a realistic goal.

The Juvenile Probation system has always taken a back seat to other county social services systems when it comes to funding. However, we are the "System" who is constantly called upon to intervene on behalf of those youth who are beyond the control of Children & Youth, Mental Health, Drug & Alcohol and Education. It was and will continue to be our position that with the additional \$2 million appropriation, our system would be propelled to the forefront as a result of our creativity and initiative in working not only with the delinquent population, but those other youth who may be at risk.

As you continue to hear testimony from my colleagues today, one very important theme will continue to manifest itself, that being - Funding. What is as important, however, is the

impact all of this has on the Juvenile Probation System.

Pennsylvania can be proud of our "System". We have received national recognition and are considered innovative, creative leaders in the field. We have shown the ability to work with extremely troubled youth using Intensive and Aftercare Services. We have attacked the drug and alcohol problems of our youth by utilizing state-wide urinalysis and specialized probation initiatives. We are holding our delinquent youth more accountable by creating Community Service and Restitution Programs. Our Probation Officers are trained in the latest techniques for working with at-risk-youth, and are constantly challenged to be more creative with their clients in a cost effective manner.

However, we still lack Government support necessary for the continued growth and development of our system. It appears we are currently being held hostage by the same people we need help from. It would be a travesty if our system continues to be in jeopardy due to inadequate funding and our troubled youth and families are the ones who will suffer the most.

In conclusion, as President of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, I am requesting your assistance to help us continue to provide the best delivery of services possible to those troubled youth of our Commonwealth. Certainly the passage of House Bill #24 into law would be the ultimate goal of our association and clearly is one of our main objectives so that our system could not continue to be manipulated. Just as important is getting the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission Grant-In-Aid out of Budgetary Reserve and into the hands of the County Juvenile Probation Departments, so that we can continue to do the work we are mandated to do.

On behalf of our memberships, I thank you for providing me the opportunity to voice our concern and would appreciate any assistance you can provide.