

This testimony
was read by
William Reznor,
not Martin Horn

**STATEMENT
OF
MARTIN F. HORN
SECRETARY OF CORRECTIONS**

**HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND CORRECTIONS**

September 16, 1997

On the matter of Senate Bill 116 - Authorizing the Department of Corrections, county commissioners, boards of inspectors or other officials in charge of correctional facilities to establish inmate work force programs.

GOOD AFTERNOON. REPRESENTATIVE BIRMELIN, MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE -- THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO SPEAK TO SB 116, SENATOR MOWERY'S PROPOSED INMATE WORK FORCE ACT. THIS LEGISLATION RECOGNIZES THE RIDGE ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO PUT INMATES TO WORK - FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND TO TEACH THEM THE VALUE OF WORK.

HISTORICALLY IN PENNSYLVANIA, INMATES HAVE WORKED DURING EMERGENCIES, SUCH AS FLOODS AND SNOWSTORMS. SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE BOOT CAMP PROGRAM AT QUEHANNA, INMATES HAVE WORKED IN STATE FORESTS - CLEARING TRAILS, REMOVING DEAD TREES, AND RAKING AREAS AROUND CABINS. IN 1996 GOVERNOR RIDGE PROPOSED AND THE LEGISLATURE APPROPRIATED AN ADDITIONAL \$1.7 MILLION FOR SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM. THIS MONEY ENABLED THE DEPARTMENT TO EXPAND THE PROGRAM BEYOND ITS PILOT PHASE.

INMATE WORK CREWS ARE DEPLOYED ONLY FOR FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES, CITY, COUNTY, AND OTHER MUNICIPALITIES, SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR CHARITIES AND PUBLIC INTEREST PURPOSES. ALL REQUESTS FOR PROJECTS FROM THE ABOVE ENTITIES ARE CONSIDERED BY A COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF INSTITUTIONAL PERSONNEL. ALL WORK SITES ARE INSPECTED BY AT LEAST TWO CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS PRIOR TO THE PROJECT BEING APPROVED.

OUR PROGRAM INVOLVES THE PARTICIPATION OF INMATES IN COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROJECTS. TO DATE, THE MAJORITY OF THE WORK HAS BEEN WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. INMATES AT OUR MERCER FACILITY WORKED WITH WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH TO CUT BRUSH ALONG A FLOOD CONTROL CANAL. INMATES FROM RETREAT WORKED WITH PLYMOUTH BOROUGH TO CLEAN AND REMOVE TREES AND VEGETATION FROM A DAM.

IN 1996, WE FORMED AN ALLIANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES WHEREIN INMATES FROM OUR COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM HELPED WITH FLOOD RECOVERY EFFORTS IN OUR STATE PARKS AND FORESTS. WE ALSO HAVE INMATES IN THE COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM WHO ARE WORKING INSIDE OUR INSTITUTIONS ON PROJECTS BENEFITTING CHARITIES. INMATES IN OUR FEMALE INSTITUTIONS WHO PARTICIPATE IN COSMETOLOGY SCHOOL RESTYLE WIGS FOR THE CANCER SOCIETY. AT CAMBRIDGE SPRINGS, INMATES PRODUCE BRAILLE MATERIALS. I BELIEVE THAT SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THIS PROGRAM DURING AN AUGUST VISIT TO THE FACILITY.

UP TO 500 INMATES PER YEAR HAVE PARTICIPATED IN COMMUNITY WORK PROJECTS. THEY HAVE WORKED A TOTAL OF 224,676 HOURS: 67,590 HOURS FOR COMMUNITY WORK PROJECTS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND 10,872 HOURS ON PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS. IN ADDITION, INMATES HAVE PARTICIPATED IN COMMUNITY WORK PROJECTS WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES FOR A TOTAL OF 18,610 HOURS. INMATES HAVE ALSO WORKED IN COMMUNITY WORK PROJECTS FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES: A TOTAL OF 2,320 HOURS. LASTLY, INMATES HAVE WORKED 72,498 HOURS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROJECTS AND 52,789 HOURS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

THIS BILL INSTITUTIONALIZES WHAT THE RIDGE ADMINISTRATION IS COMMITTED TO -- PUTTING INMATES TO WORK -- AND IS CONSISTENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S DIRECTION. WE SUPPORT THIS BILL BECAUSE IT PROVIDES ON-GOING LEGISLATIVE COMMITMENT TO THIS PROGRAM. IN ITS CURRENT FORM WE RECOMMEND ONE REVISION TO THE BILL. SECTION 4 SUBSECTION (E) RELATES TO THE SUPERVISION OF INMATE WORK CREWS. THE BILL WAS AMENDED TO RESTRICT SUPERVISION STAFF TO GUARDS OR CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS. THE DEPARTMENT UTILIZES LABOR FOREMEN IN THIS CAPACITY. THESE EMPLOYEES PROVIDE SECURITY AND THE REQUISITE EXPERTISE TO SUPERVISE IN THE VARIOUS WORK PROJECTS. WHILE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS ALSO PROVIDE SECURITY, THEY ARE NOT TRAINED IN THE SPECIFIC SKILLS NEEDED FOR THE WORK PROJECT AT HAND. SINCE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS AND LABOR FOREMEN ARE BOTH IN THE H-1 BARGAINING UNIT, WE PROPOSE SUBSTITUTION OF THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE: "EMPLOYEES WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CARE, CUSTODY AND CONTROL OF INMATES."

THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS BELIEVES THAT INMATES SHOULD WORK AND THEY SHOULD DO WORK THAT BENEFITS THE TAXPAYERS. THIS BILL FURTHERS THAT GOAL.

THANK YOU.