



PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY PROVIDERS ASSOCIATION

*"promoting quality community services for persons with mental illness,
mental retardation, and addictive diseases"*

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Task Force on Intermediate Punishment of the House Judiciary Committee

Representative Stephen Maitland, Chairman

Testimony by Lynn Cooper Breckenmaker, Drug & Alcohol, Adult Mental Health Policy Specialist Pennsylvania Community Providers Association

August 20, 1998

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about intermediate punishment. My name is Lynn Cooper Breckenmaker. I am a Policy Specialist at the Providers Association and I specialize in the areas of adult mental health and adult drug and alcohol issues.

The Pennsylvania Community Providers Association represents over 240 community agencies across the Commonwealth. Our mission is to promote quality community services for persons with mental illness, mental retardation and addictive diseases. The Providers Association strongly supports the Intermediate Punishment Program, and we urge you to continue legislative support of the program through increased funding.

We are all aware of the overwhelming drug and alcohol problems that exist in the commonwealth's jails and prisons. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections reports that over 90% of the inmates have some degree of drug and/or alcohol problem.

The commonwealth is spending a massive amount of state dollars on prisons. In fact, between 1981 and 1995, the Department of Corrections budget increased by 663%! And that trend has not diminished.

We need to get to the root of the problem, which is alcoholism and/or drug addiction.

I am here to tell you that treatment works.

I have a friend whose name is Ken. I went to visit Ken in the Dauphin County prison. Ken is not a criminal; he is an alcoholic. What Ken needs is treatment.

The community providers stand ready to do our part to meet this need. We believe that with appropriate treatment we can reduce the recidivism rates that currently exist in our criminal justice system.

As I have said, we will not solve the problem of crime until we get to the root of it. Statistics show that a significant percentage of persons in our jails and prisons not only have substance abuse problems, but are incarcerated because of alcohol and drug-related offenses. We must address the need for supervision of people who commit crime but we must provide both supervision and treatment. The Intermediate Punishment Program has demonstrated that fact.

With all the changes in welfare reform it is difficult today for low-income people to access treatment. It is even more difficult for people in the criminal justice system. The Intermediate Punishment Program makes it possible for these folks to access the treatment they need and stop the cycle of addiction and crime

The Pennsylvania Community Providers Association strongly encourages the legislature to continue its wise decision to support the Intermediate Punishment Program and to increase funding in the future in order to reduce the skyrocketing costs of our criminal justice system.

I welcome your questions at this time and offer the assistance of our association and its member agencies in addressing this challenging issue.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Figures from *Fastfacts 94*, prepared by the Office of Planning, Research, and Statistics, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.