

April 29, 1999

House Judiciary Committee
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA

Ref: House Bill 212, 213, 214, and 215

To the Members of the House and Honored Guests:

I am here this morning to testify for the above referenced House Bills which were introduced by our Representative Steve Settler and Representatives Coy, Preston, Deluca, Ramos, E.Z. Taylor, M. Cohen, Robinson, Platts, J. Taylor, Harhai, Steelman, and Civera.

The prostitution problem has been with us for a long time but recently we were very encouraged by the tenacity and innovation of the City of York Newton Square neighborhood association.

The local prostitutes of the city of York are well known business entrepreneurs who have walked the streets and are well known and recognized by our police officers. The area that is frequented by the prostitutes and known to prospective Customers (the johns) was the area surrounding the U.S. Post Office. Because of their obvious presence and complaints of good decent people there was an intense effort to arrest and prosecute them with the help of the Pennsylvania State police undercover troopers. Targeted were the prostitutes by male undercover vice officers and in addition female troopers were dressed to simulate prostitutes to target the males that solicit prostitutes.

The impact of this effort even though successful was to relocate the business location of the prostitutes to a neighborhood of middle class residents in an area of the city Newton Square. This activity was brazen and very upsetting to the people living in the community. Not only were the prostitutes displaced and conducting business in parked cars of their clients; but their clients are not local. Consequently they were slowly following decent woman who live in the Newton Square area, soliciting them for sex and then making crude remarks to woman who did not respond to their suggestions. These innocent woman and their husbands or boyfriends became angry by the activities of these male strangers cruising through their neighborhood.

Public Meetings were held with the City Officials invited to hear the concerns of the Newton Square neighborhood association. Government officials including Representative Stetler, Mayor Robertson, City Council members, District Attorney's Office and the Police Department attended. As a result a strengthened Loitering in Public City Ordinance was enacted targeting the street walking activities of the Prostitutes, which city police have since enforced.

Now we are here today to target the customers, the people that are the clients of the prostitutes who ultimately affect the quality of life of the people who live in the neighborhood that they cruise through and disrupt with their deviant behavior. These new bills will, I believe, discourage their customers when the first arrests are made under the authority of this legislation. The news media will publicize the fact that someone who solicited a prostitute has lost his driving privileges or the vehicle they were driving. They lost the vehicle because it was used as an instrument of a crime and therefore it was legally impounded or maybe confiscated.

I think the message sent will be loud and clear and the solicitation in our neighborhoods in public will be drastically curtailed. Thank you for the opportunity to speak for the good people of the City of York.

Sincerely,

Herbert F. Grofcsik
Police Commissioner