

**State Rep. Harold James**  
**Remarks: Prison Experiments**  
**Monday, February 22, 1999**

I'd like to thank both chairmen of the House Judiciary Committee, and I'd like to thank my counterpart as subcommittee chairman, Jerry Birmelin, for authorizing these hearings to explore medical testing in Pennsylvania

I hope we can use this forum to begin a full review of accusations that our prison inmates have been used for past medical tests and experiments.

As policy-makers, it is our job to find out the true severity of this problem and to begin taking steps to correct the injustices.

We must develop legislative policies to prevent any further atrocities against our citizens, and we must look at ways of making reparations to the victims and their families for the testing they had to endure while incarcerated.

As we examine these issues, we must determine whether any form of compensation -- either by the state or the testing institutions -- should be provided to test subjects who have ongoing medical problems as a direct result of the experiments.

Too many times, our prisoners are treated like second-class citizens, even though many of them are forced into a life of crime because of the economic and social barriers that prohibit them from achieving their goals.

Nonetheless, for their crimes they should be punished. But they should not be subject to such treatment as medical testing or random research experiments.

As Democratic chairman of the Judiciary's Subcommittee on Crime and Corrections, I want to work with committee members to make sure such atrocities do not occur in Pennsylvania, as they already have in the past.

Published reports late last year indicated that inmate testing at Philadelphia's former Holmesburg State Prison took place for more than two decades, beginning in the 1950s and running through the 1970s.

The testing and experimentation -- sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania and branches of the U.S. military -- exposed many inmates to severe gastrointestinal problems, visible body scars and psychological problems that remain today.

Allen M. Hornblum's book, "Acres of Skin," brought attention to the inhumane practices, spurring public debate and scrutiny that is partly responsible for our hearing here today.

Newspaper stories in the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Philadelphia Tribune further detailed the medical testing and experimentation on prison inmates, and a number of new shows across the country have featured similar stories.

It is unconscionable to think that these atrocities were done on human beings held in any of our state's prisons. And it would be unthinkable that all of us here would not want to set up safeguards to make sure it never happens again.

I am encouraged by these discussions, and I look forward to working with the committee to develop policies that will make sure such actions do not occur again. Thank you.