



**PA State Corrections Officer's Association  
Legislative Action Team**

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President

Greg Griffin  
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*We Patrol the Toughest Beat in America, Welcome To Our Blocks.*

**Testimony before the House Judiciary  
Committee by State Corrections  
Officers'**

**John Henderson  
Gregory Griffin**

**SCI Chester  
April 5, 2000**

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Good Afternoon Members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am Greg Griffin, the Vice-President of the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association and with me is fellow State Corrections Officer John Henderson.

State Corrections Officers are a vital part of the Treatment and Rehabilitation Process. We are here today to offer suggestions to difficult challenges inside of our 24 State Correctional Institutions.

I believe Inmates should receive Treatment and Counseling, so that when they rejoin the community, as most of them will, the Inmate will be able to adapt and be a productive citizen, rather than another crime statistic, with a victim.

Our title is "Corrections Officer" and one of our responsibilities is to correct the Inmate if necessary and to be a positive role model.

The point that should not be argued is that the better trained the Drug & Alcohol and Treatment Specialists are, the more chance you will have of a successful treatment program. Corrections Officers are part of the treatment team and are with the Inmates 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

It would also make sense to train the Corrections Officers to a higher degree. Unfortunately the level of training Corrections Officers receive is lacking in several key areas.

The United States Department of Labor recently adopted a National Corrections Officer's Curriculum that recommends 520 hours (13 weeks) of training for new Corrections Officers at the Training Academy.

Unfortunately Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers receive only 200 hours (5 weeks)- We are 8 weeks short of the United States Department of Labor's recommended Correction Officer's Curriculum.

State Corrections Officers need additional training in Anger Management, Use of Force and Communication Skills. It has been 10 years since I graduated from the Academy and I have not received any updated training in Anger Management, or Communication Skills.

According to the Criminal Justice Institute in Connecticut, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in assaults of Corrections Officers by Inmates, 4<sup>th</sup> in Overcrowding, 3<sup>rd</sup> in Inmate to Inmate Homicides and 39<sup>th</sup> in Inmate to Corrections Officer Staffing Ratio.

On a positive note the Legislature is responding to the violent conditions inside our State Institutions by the Introduction of Senate Bill 1047, the Institutional Sexual Assault Bill, which would upgrade sexual assault in our Institutions to a Felony Charge.

Still more must be done to provide a safe rehabilitative treatment atmosphere inside our State Institutions.

From a Correction Officer's point of view, meaningful Inmate jobs must be created in order to eliminate idle time and the work ethic should be instilled so that Inmates can put it to use when they have served their time.

Currently, the Senate is considering Senate Bill 837 that encourages Industries inside the Institutions and the same time allows for safeguards against loss of civilian jobs.

State Corrections Officers recommend increased training for Correction Officers, along with many more Inmate jobs. Hard work is respectable and a positive rehabilitative program.

Thank you, Officer Henderson would also like to add some comments.



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Good Afternoon, I am Johnie Henderson, a member of the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association. I also would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to speak today, on the subject of Drug and Alcohol, Mental Health and Medical Care programs of the Department of Corrections.

As a Corrections Officer, my responsibilities include Care, Custody, and Control of Inmates. On our tour of duty, the Corrections Officer observes inmates on a daily basis. We are the eyes and ears of the Institution.

Officers work hand in hand with the Medical Department. When reporting medical emergencies, it is the responsibility of the Corrections Officer to insure that the area is safe for the medical personnel to respond and to report unusual behavior to our Supervisors.

My personal opinion of the Medical Departments, of the two Institutions I have worked at are that they are equal to or exceed Medical Services outside the wire. Inmates receive similar treatment as the soldiers do in the United States Army. They have the opportunity to sign up for sick call and treatment programs. Their Dental and Prescription Plans exceed the plans that are provided to our Senior Citizens. Along with the above, the Medical Department is staffed 24 hours, 7 days per week.

The only problem I foresee is not the fault of the Department Of Corrections; it is the statewide problem of overcrowded Institutions. When an Institution is designed to accommodate 480 Inmates and 800 are housed there; it creates a burden to all staff members.

Treatment programs have limited amounts of slots for the Inmates. Due to security reasons and size of classrooms, Inmates have to wait for the next available session, which creates idle time. This is where Inmates get impatient, complain and problems arise.

Thank you, we are now available for any questions you may have.

## Working – The Greatest Remedy

Working is man's greatest function. He is nothing, he can do nothing, he can achieve nothing, fulfill nothing without working.

If you are burdened with seemingly unfair responsibilities—work. If you are happy—keep right on working. Idleness gives room for doubts and fears. If disappointments come—work. When faith falters—work. When dreams are shattered and hope seems dead—work. No matter what ails you—work.

Work—it is the greatest remedy available for both mental and physical afflictions.



PRINTER'S NO. 937

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 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA
 

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## SENATE BILL

 No. 837 Session of 1999
 

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 INTRODUCED BY GREENLEAF, O'PAKE, WHITE, ROBBINS AND WAUGH,  
 APRIL 26, 1999
 

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 REFERRED TO JUDICIARY, APRIL 26, 1999
 

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## AN ACT

1 Establishing the Private Sector Prison Industry Board and  
 2 providing for its powers and duties; providing for employment  
 3 of inmates by private industry and for subcontracts with  
 4 correctional agencies; establishing guidelines for inmate  
 5 compensation; providing for location of private sector prison  
 6 industry; and authorizing superintendents, wardens and other  
 7 officials in charge of correctional institutions to establish  
 8 inmate work force programs.

9 TABLE OF CONTENTS  
 10 Section 1. Short title.  
 11 Section 2. Intent.  
 12 Section 3. Definitions.  
 13 Section 4. Private Sector Prison Industry Board.  
 14 Section 5. Powers and duties of board.  
 15 Section 6. Minimum requirements of private sector prison  
 16 industry.  
 17 Section 7. Employment of inmates by private industry.  
 18 Section 8. Disposition of inmate wages.  
 19 Section 9. Lease of prison property to private business,  
 20 private enterprise or nonprofit entity.

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1 Section 10. Competing enterprises.  
 2 Section 11. Filing of objections.  
 3 Section 12. Inmate work forces.  
 4 Section 13. Rules.  
 5 Section 14. Request for work force required.  
 6 Section 15. Prohibition on use of work force.  
 7 Section 16. Regulations.  
 8 Section 17. Administrative support.  
 9 Section 18. Immunities not waived.  
 10 Section 19. Inmate civil actions.  
 11 Section 20. Use of inmate work force not to affect certain

USA too! There is only one problem with Corrections USA – we can never say we didn't have a chance, just that we didn't take it. Join Corrections USA today.

# Corrections USA

Call 1-603-382-9707 for more information

Statistics Compiled from the Corrections Yearbook 1997 ↓ 1998

## Pennsylvania

		Ranking	Highest	
Total Number of Inmates	34,537	9 <sup>th</sup>	148,072	California
Total Number of Line Staff	6,276	10 <sup>th</sup>	24,091	Texas
Inmate to Officer Ratio	5:1	39 <sup>th</sup>	2.8:1	MA,VT,SC
*CUSA Inmate to Officer Ratio	26:1	39 <sup>th</sup>	N/A	N/A
Assaults Against Staff	957	4 <sup>th</sup>	1,274	Florida
Training Hours, Introductory	160	31 <sup>st</sup>	640	Michigan
Wardens Max Salary	\$86,983	7 <sup>th</sup>	\$102,557	New York
CO's max. salary	\$45,671	7 <sup>th</sup>	\$ 50,820	California
CO's entry level salary	\$21,031	22 <sup>nd</sup>	\$ 31,805	New Jersey
Percentage of female CO's	8.1%	43 <sup>rd</sup>	37%	Arkansas
Turnover rate during probation	29.2%	38 <sup>th</sup>	0%	Rhode Island
AIDS cases confirmed	221	8 <sup>th</sup>	1,495	New York
Overcrowding %of design capacity	151.3%	4 <sup>th</sup>	85.1%	Mississippi

\*Typical Inmate to Officer ratios are reported as a ratio determined by simply dividing the total number of inmates by the total number of Officers. No consideration is given to the fact that we go home after eight, have days off, vacations, sick leave etc. With that CUSA's has developed a much more accurate methodology taking in these factors. For a copy of our staffing ratio breakdown call CUSA today.

Everyday in Pennsylvania 2.6 Officers are assaulted by the inmate population. During a 20 year career a PA CO can expect to be assaulted by an inmate a minimum of three times. PA not only has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest assault rate against staff it also has the 4<sup>th</sup> worst overcrowding problem at 151.3% over design capacity.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE PSCOA?  
AFTER TODAY ITS OUR FAULT IF PA STATE CO"S REMAIN WEAK AND UNKNOWN.

**NATIONAL**  
**GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING**  
**LOCAL APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS**

developed by

THE CORRECTIONS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE COALITION

(CCJC)

for the occupation of

**CORRECTIONAL OFFICER**

**8. IMPROVED TRAINING FOR STATE AND LOCAL  
CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS**

**Corrections USA Position:** Work toward improving national training guidelines and standards.

**NATIONAL TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS:** On January 29, 1998, Anthony Swoope, National Director of the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (U.S. Department of Labor) approved and certified "National Guidelines for Developing Local Apprenticeship Standards" for the occupation of correctional officer. These guidelines were adopted by members of the Corrections and Criminal Justice Coalition (CCJC), who now belong to Corrections USA (Only one of the signatories has not joined CUSA). They provide for a minimum of 520 hours of academy training; 140 hours of supplemental instruction; and not less than 3,600 hours (or two years) of on the job training. These guidelines represent an effective tool in fighting privatization and discredit training standards developed by the American Correctional Association, which simply require that officers be trained in the use of firearms and chemical agents.

## THE RETURN OF DETERRENCE

William Penn is generally considered the father of American corrections. His idea of the correctional process was simple. He believed that prison should be an austere environment which would compel lawless individuals to be penitent, or in other words sorry, for their actions. He rationalized that this process would serve as a personal catharsis for sincere prisoners and allow them to return to society a better, and law abiding citizen.



WILLIAM PENN

Clearly the strict Quaker protocols of the early penitentiaries are not a viable option in today's society, but the basic concept remains valid.

The current corrections policies clearly are failures. The idea of reforming inmates by coddling them in plush surroundings and affording them amenities which common working people can't get, just doesn't work. The inmate and budget explosions of the eighties and nineties prove this point.

What is needed is a return to the Quaker ideals of William Penn, nineties style. The punitive aspect of corrections must be evident. Prison should be a place that deters would-be criminals.

What is also needed is a penal system which addresses the modern problems of drugs, gangs, and the rest of the social issues facing us daily.

Finally, any program should be geared to raise the self esteem and self motivation aspects of the inmate population. Clearly lack of motivation and low self esteem are major factors in the use of drugs, membership in gangs and other anti-social behavior.

What the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections needs is a total reformation of our system. By basing the entire penal process on inmate self motivation and punitive measures for noncompliance we can return to a true correction environment and solve the budgetary problems of the Department all at once.

We need to first restructure the operation of the correctional institutions. Inmates should enter the correctional process in an austere environment with education and self motivation being the driving factors. When they have shown progress they could be transferred to an institution which would be less rigid and offer a limited number of recreational options.

Inmates who were not self motivated, disciplinary problems; lazy, or otherwise noncompliant, in addition to the current sanctions in place, would also become eligible for placement in an austere prison. This prison would be even more strict than the entry level institutions and would be structured as the ultimate deterrent facility.

If all of this sounds familiar, it should. Over one year ago Dallas presented a detailed plan to do this at an AFSCME President's Meeting. It was unanimously approved and Council 13 was supposed to draft a proposal and forward it to the Commissioner. To date this proposal has not been forthcoming.

Clearly returning the deterrent factors to the prison environment is the only thing that will save our system. William Penn had the right idea, make prisons a place of penance. Today's philosophy appears to be make prisons a recreational playground with entertainment, comfort, and pacifying appeasements for all.

Today's philosophy has failed and is bankrupting the entire Department. Why not give Mr. Penn's idea one more chance?