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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

MAIN CAPITOL
ROOM 140
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

PUBLIC HEARING
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND
BOARD OF PROBATION AND PAROLE

TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2012
1:32 P.M.

BEFORE:

- HONORABLE WILLIAM F. ADOLPH, JR.,
Majority Chairman
- HONORABLE JOHN BEAR
- HONORABLE MARTIN CAUSER
- HONORABLE JIM CHRISTIANA
- HONORABLE GORDON DENLINGER
- HONORABLE BRIAN ELLIS
- HONORABLE MAUREE GINGRICH
- HONORABLE GLEN GRELL
- HONORABLE TOM KILLION
- HONORABLE DAVID MILLARD
- HONORABLE MARK MUSTIO
- HONORABLE BERNIE O'NEILL
- HONORABLE MICHAEL PEIFER
- HONORABLE SCOTT PERRY
- HONORABLE SCOTT PETRI
- HONORABLE TINA PICKETT
- HONORABLE JEFFREY PYLE
- HONORABLE MARIO M. SCAVELLO
- HONORABLE CURT SONNEY

BRENDA J. PARDUN, RPR
P. O. BOX 278
MAYTOWN, PA 17550
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1 BEFORE: (cont'd)

2 HONORABLE JOSEPH MARKOSEK, Minority Chairman
HONORABLE MATT BRADFORD
3 HONORABLE MICHELLE BROWNLEE
HONORABLE H. SCOTT CONKLIN
4 HONORABLE PAUL COSTA
HONORABLE DEBERAH KULA
5 HONORABLE TIM MAHONEY
HONORABLE MICHAEL O'BRIEN
6 HONORABLE CHERELLE PARKER
HONORABLE JOHN SABATINA
7 HONORABLE STEVE SAMUELSON
HONORABLE MATTHEW SMITH
8 HONORABLE GREG VITALI
HONORABLE RONALD WATERS

9

10 ALSO PRESENT:

11 HONORABLE PAUL CLYMER
HONORABLE MARK GILLEN
12 HONORABLE SCOTT HUTCHINSON
HONORABLE RICK SACCONI
13 HONORABLE RICHARD STEVENSON
HONORABLE MIKE TOBASH
14 HONORABLE VANESSA LOWERY BROWN
HONORABLE TOM CALTAGIRONE
15 HONORABLE DOM COSTA
HONORABLE PAMELA DELISSIO
16 HONORABLE BILL DEWEESE
HONORABLE DAN FRANKEL
17 HONORABLE BILL KORTZ
HONORABLE MARK LONGIETTE
18 HONORABLE HARRY READSHAW
HONORABLE CHRIS SAINATO

19

20 ED NOLAN, MAJORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MIRIAM FOX, MINORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
21 DAN CLARK, COMMITTEE CHIEF COUNSEL

22

BRENDA J. PARDUN, RPR
23 REPORTER - NOTARY PUBLIC

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Good afternoon,
3 everyone. Like to call to order House
4 Appropriations Committee budget hearing on the
5 Department of Corrections.

6 Good afternoon.

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good afternoon.

8 MR. POTTEIGER: Good afternoon.

9 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: With us today is Mike
10 Potteiger --

11 MR. POTTEIGER: Michael Potteiger.

12 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Okay. Chairman of
13 the Board of Probation and Parole. And also with
14 us is John E. Wetzel, secretary, Department of
15 Corrections.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good afternoon.

17 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Welcome, gentlemen.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

19 MR. POTTEIGER: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Would either of you
21 like to make some opening brief comments?

22 MR. POTTEIGER: Good afternoon,
23 Chairman Adolph and Chairman Markosek and members
24 of the House Appropriations Committee.

25 I would like to begin by thanking you

1 for the opportunity to meet with you to today to
2 discuss the board's 2012-2013 budget. I look
3 forward to answering your questions about how the
4 board will continue to protect the safety of the
5 public by bringing about much needed government
6 reform so we can continue to make the board more
7 efficient. I think this is good not only for the
8 taxpayers but for the community of the
9 Commonwealth.

10 The board recognizes that the
11 Commonwealth has big challenges this fiscal year,
12 as it did last year, but one of the most basic
13 fundamental responsibilities of government is to
14 protect its people. This budget helps us do that.

15 The board is one of the few agencies in
16 the Commonwealth to have an increase over the last
17 two years. We are very grateful for the additional
18 resources and the governor's recognition of the
19 importance of the board's mission on the public
20 safety.

21 Our proposed budget allows the board to
22 continue to fund positions and the parole agents
23 who are out in the community, doing day-to-day
24 jobs, engaging in the communities to change
25 criminal behavior and reduce recidivism. Our

1 priority for the funding continues to be our field
2 agents while at the same time we continue to seek
3 ways to reduce operating costs.

4 I'd like to point out, but I think it's
5 pretty obvious, but should be stated, the board
6 does not make decisions to grant individual
7 offenders to be paroled based upon the size of the
8 population. The board's job is to determine if the
9 offender's risk has been reduced and they are a
10 suitable candidate for parole.

11 However, having said that, we continue
12 to work with and collaborate with the Department of
13 Corrections to look at the whole process in itself.
14 We have seen improvements over the last few years.
15 We have a decreased median number of days for the
16 offender to be released by a minimum of six days.
17 We have decreased the number of technical parole
18 violators being returned to the prison by 36
19 percent from fiscal year 2005-2006. And we utilize
20 that date is because the board started utilizing
21 evidence-based practices in our efforts.

22 The number of offenders who have
23 successfully completed parole has increased over
24 that five-year period, while, at the same time, our
25 three-year recidivism rate has decreased almost 6

1 percent over the past five years. Currently our
2 recidivism rate is 42 percent, which is lower than
3 the national average.

4 All this is good news, and I'm proud to
5 be leading this agency on the cutting edge of using
6 improved research techniques and measures of
7 performance, but we understand that we need to
8 continue to collaborate with the Department of
9 Corrections to look at the fiscal means that we can
10 reduce the prison population safely in the
11 community by reducing costs.

12 Thank you for your time, and I look
13 forward to answering your questions.

14 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you, Chairman.

15 Mr. Secretary, would you like some
16 opening comments?

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: You know, I
18 submitted testimony, so that's fine for me. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Okay. Thank you.

21 Mr. Secretary, it's been some time
22 since I've seen a budget proposal for the
23 Department of Corrections that has actually a
24 decrease in total spending from the previous year.
25 And obviously there's one large line item

1 responsible for this in your --in your budget.

2 You want to talk about that?

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. What this
4 budget is predicated on, and you can really view
5 this budget as the administration's kind of pathway
6 to how we reduce spending in corrections. We
7 certainly talked about reducing spending in
8 corrections long enough. This takes a first step.
9 And, really, it's identifying pockets of our
10 population who we can get out, get out into the
11 community.

12 And one of the things with the increase
13 to parole that you should think of, is that they're
14 getting out, and we're talking about making our
15 system more efficient and processing people through
16 quicker, that gets them out in the community. They
17 still need oversight, the vast majority of them, in
18 the community. So the slight increase in the
19 board's budget is consistent with this approach,
20 where we're identifying processes that lead to
21 delays in the parole process and getting better at
22 that, and also, through legislation, specifically
23 Senate Bill 100 and the justice reinvestment
24 initiative, identifying legislative augments to
25 things like that the state intermediate punishment

1 program and other existing successful programs to
2 make better decisions and placement of people.

3 So this is predicated on our ability to
4 reduce population, and then, subsequently, close
5 housing units to redeploy that staff to reduce
6 overtime.

7 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Let's talk about this
8 \$21-million reduction for the medical care costs.
9 Could you explain how the savings is going to take
10 place?

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. A big part of
12 that was passed last year with the budget. Act 22
13 was passed. That charges Medicare rate and
14 Medicaid rate for inmates and inpatient and
15 outpatient. Last year, we put some money into
16 that, but we really had no idea to get a fair
17 projection. So a big piece of that is, now that we
18 have half a year under Act 22, we have a reasonable
19 expectation the money we'll save, including federal
20 matching funds that we got that we didn't
21 necessarily anticipate, coupled with the fact that
22 we rebid the medical contract.

23 Now, the medical contract had not been
24 bid for eight years. It was just a cost of living
25 rollover for eight years. So by bidding it, we had

1 several bidders, more than a handful of bidders, we
2 anticipate lower cost through that. So that's
3 really where that 21 million comes from.

4 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you for that
5 explanation.

6 Is there any future constructions of
7 state prisons in the Commonwealth of PA?

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. There's
9 currently a couple projects. The Benner Township
10 project, which should be completed in January of
11 '13, although we pushed back the occupancy date to
12 September. And by pushing it back that far, we
13 saved 15 million in next year's budget, by delaying
14 that for the following year. And then we have a
15 replacement of SCI Graterford, which is called
16 SCI Phoenix, which is on the same site as
17 Graterford. And that's replacing old Graterford
18 and adding about five hundred beds, for a total of
19 forty-one hundred beds on the site, including a
20 female housing unit. Those are the only two major
21 projects going on.

22 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Okay.

23 Chairman Markosek.

24 REP. MARKOSEK: Thank you, Chairman.

25 First of all, for the information of

1 the members, Rep. Matt Bradford has arrived, and we
2 do have a guest, Rep. Tom Caltagirone, the
3 Democratic chair of the House Judiciary Committee
4 is with us also.

5 Secretary Wetzel, Mr. Pettinger (sic),
6 welcome -- Chairman Pettinger, welcome.

7 Secretary Wetzel, I just -- maybe a
8 brief rundown, if you will, of bringing prisoners
9 back from other states.

10 Last year, I believe, when you
11 testified, if my memory serves, there was about
12 two thousand prisoners that were housed in other
13 states. And you had a goal to retrieve those, for
14 lack of a better phrase.

15 Can you give us an update on the
16 efforts there to do that?

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct. We had
18 eleven hundred inmates in Michigan and another
19 thousand inmates in Virginia at this time last
20 year. The inmates from Michigan were returned, I
21 believe, by the end of June. They were returned
22 last fiscal year, the eleven hundred.

23 We're in the process of returning the
24 other thousand inmates from Virginia. So they'll
25 all be back by the end of March.

1 And that was, really, the plan of the
2 last administration. There was a lot of housing
3 units that were constructed across the state when
4 the parole moratorium kicked in and the population
5 increased by the forty-two hundred beds, an
6 increase because of that couple-month moratorium.

7 So now those housing units are
8 complete. We were able to bring the inmates back.

9 REP. MARKOSEK: And the budget
10 question, then, relative to that is, how does that
11 affect your budget? Does that save you money, cost
12 you more money? What's the ultimate effect on your
13 budget relative to having those prisoners housed
14 here instead of paying somebody else to house them?

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: It saved up, in this
16 year's budget, in 2011-2012's budget, and some of
17 our making our budget last year is predicated on
18 savings from returning everybody, because a lot of
19 those folks didn't -- we didn't have to put them in
20 new housing units. We had space in existing
21 housing units.

22 So, then, when you look at those, that
23 marginal cost for us for an inmate per day is about
24 \$14. When we add them to an additional housing
25 unit, assuming they don't have big medical costs --

1 and, really, that was one of the criteria, was
2 sending people out of state. So we sent relatively
3 well-behaved and low medical needs and low
4 behavior, low mental health needs inmates out of
5 state. Those inmates coming back, plug into
6 existing units, are relatively cheap. So that's
7 really how we achieved our savings.

8 REP. MARKOSEK: Okay.

9 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

12 Next question will be asked by Rep.
13 Dave Millard.

14 REP. MILLARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing
16 before us today.

17 My questions will be directed towards
18 you, Secretary Wetzel. First question -- I do
19 not have -- a comment first. I don't have a
20 correctional facility located, per se, in Columbia
21 County, but I do have a number of constituents who
22 work at either Dallas, Retreat, or Coal Township.
23 And the questions that I've received from them
24 lately has been pretty much about the privatization
25 of nurses.

1 Would you give us an update on that,
2 where are we going with this, if a decision, in
3 fact, is going to be made concerning that?

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Sure. We have -- as
5 I said earlier, we bid medical services, and the
6 RFP was structured in two lots. Lot number one is
7 business as usual. Lot number two of that bid
8 asked the vendors to submit a plan to privatize all
9 the medical staff.

10 Currently, we have all the medical
11 staff, except nurses and medical records staff,
12 privatized. We have two facilities that all the
13 medical staff, including those categories, are
14 privatized.

15 So the bid basically says business as
16 usual or privatization of all staff. Both bids
17 came in. A team of department staff members, along
18 with DGS, went through a scoring process. We're at
19 the relative end of that process. So we hope,
20 within the next two months, we'll make a decision
21 as to which lot and which direction and which
22 vendor and all those things.

23 REP. MILLARD: What protections will
24 you offer to the employees who are currently
25 nurses?

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: There's some
2 protections built into the collective bargaining
3 agreement, protection such as bumping and those
4 kinds of things. But, also, in the RFP, we
5 specifically stated that our existing nursing staff
6 be given first consideration for jobs.

7 So if -- if we would go that route with
8 privatization, that would really be the first pool
9 they'd look for. And, also, because of the number
10 of staff involved, their bargaining units are also
11 recognized because of that scope. So that's a
12 protection in itself.

13 REP. MILLARD: And if they transition
14 in, is that at their current rate of pay, current
15 benefit package?

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't know that.
17 I don't know that.

18 REP. MILLARD: All right.

19 The other question that I have here is
20 that, recently, at Camp Hill, an inmate was caught
21 in the act of drug distribution. And I'd like to
22 know, is that rampant throughout the penal system
23 here in Pennsylvania? What measures do you take to
24 oversee it, to catch it, to prevent it? Any
25 comments?

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. We --
2 actually, we were part of the process that led to
3 the apprehension of this individual and the other
4 individuals, through our internal affairs
5 department as well as our local folks who monitor
6 phone calls. We have the ability to record and
7 monitor phone calls, and that takes place a regular
8 basis. Although, quite honestly, with 52,000
9 inmates, and most of them in general population are
10 able to make, you know, fifteen-minute calls,
11 that's a lot of phone calls to monitor.

12 So, is it rampant? I don't believe so.
13 We do a pretty good job with monitoring. Does it
14 occur? I absolutely believe that it occurs. And
15 I'm not sure that you can completely eliminate it.

16 And I think it brings up the point that
17 just because you lock somebody up, it doesn't
18 change their behavior. And, so, they can be locked
19 up for twenty years, but if they're still somebody
20 who's going to be a drug dealer, unless we do
21 something to intercede and they do something to
22 make a choice to change their behavior, they're
23 still going to be drug dealer, even though they're
24 locked up.

25 REP. MILLARD: We certainly appreciate

1 the efforts of your employees and service that they
2 perform in this Commonwealth.

3 And my final comment here is the fact
4 that, you know, I had an opportunity to visit
5 Retreat, which was a remodeled facility from its
6 original use. And I look forward to some day
7 visiting Coal Township, not as a resident,
8 obviously, but just to see a newly constructed
9 facility and the difference between.

10 But I leave you with this, when I left
11 Retreat, I was the last one of the legislative
12 committee to drive out of the parking lot, and I
13 had my window down in my vehicle. And the last
14 comment that I heard over the loud speaker was,
15 "Main Street is clear." And it took me quite a
16 number of miles to figure that one out.

17 So, thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: All right. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

22 Rep. Deb Kula.

23 REP. KULA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Good afternoon.

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good afternoon.

1 REP. KULA: I want to deal a little bit
2 with just the last questioning as far as the
3 medical services and the outsourcing or
4 privatization of the nursing staff.

5 Can you just kind of give me some
6 rationale behind why this is being projected? I
7 mean, is it a cost savings? I mean, was public
8 safety issue looked into? Were there any public
9 hearings on this? Or any input from anyone other
10 than -- or before this decision was made?

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay. I apologize,
12 if I wasn't clear in my previous answer. There's
13 no decision that's been made.

14 REP. KULA: No. I don't mean decision,
15 I meant the decision to seek the RFP for the
16 privatization of the nursing services.

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: No. There was no --
18 I mean, there was discussion within the
19 administration, certainly with the governor's
20 office, and to bid -- and money is the driving
21 force behind this. And the thought to bid it
22 private versus nonprivate gave us an opportunity to
23 get true -- a true apples-to-apples comparison, and
24 part of the ranking system or scoring system to
25 identify this factors in things such as operational

1 considerations.

2 Obviously, if we don't have a good
3 medical department and we're not delivering
4 services at the level we need to, it may save us \$5
5 a day, but we spend \$50 down the road. And we set
6 up a process that I'm very confident will ensure
7 that we have the proper level of services at the
8 same time at the best price.

9 REP. KULA: Okay. And also, within
10 that consideration, not just looking at price, but,
11 within that RFP, was this consideration of the kind
12 of in-house training that the current employees or
13 staff need to go through in order to be employed in
14 that facility? Was that part of the whole RFP,
15 that they would have to be -- go through the
16 training process?

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: That would be part
18 of the negotiations, the best-and-final-offer kind
19 of negotiations at the end. But, yes, our
20 expectation would be that we would train staff,
21 because they're still working in direct contact
22 with the inmates. And we know that having people
23 who aren't trained in that sets them up for failure
24 and, ultimately, sets the department up for
25 failure. So we --

1 REP. KULA: And I'm also trying to
2 understand that, if it was outsourced, would this
3 be where's someone that -- say a company provides
4 you with your nursing staff, would those be
5 dedicated employees just to that facility, your
6 facility? Or would they be able to -- say they
7 work three days at your facility, would they, then,
8 be able to work, say, two days at local hospital?
9 I mean, has that been vetted in any way?

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, we already do
11 this at two of our prisons, so we've already been
12 down this road and dealt with those issues. Just
13 like Commonwealth employees, Commonwealth employees
14 are able to get a second job and there's an
15 approval process for that. So it would be the same
16 kind of mechanism.

17 REP. KULA: But -- well, and I said,
18 the thing that crossed my mind in all of that is
19 the fact that -- I mean, we've sat in these
20 hearings. We've talked about, you know, the cost
21 savings that -- that could be accomplished by
22 hospitals being much more cautious in the hospital-
23 acquired infections and things such as that. So
24 you would have someone that could be going from a
25 hospital setting and then coming into the

1 correctional facility setting. So you're kind of
2 mixing everyone back and forth. I mean, I just
3 seem to think that could somewhat pose a problem.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: I mean, that's no
5 different than today. I mean, we -- as long as a
6 nurse who works for us today gets -- goes through
7 the proper process, they're allowed to have
8 secondary employment. So the circumstance you
9 described, could exist today. Whether we privatize
10 or not does not increase or decrease the likelihood
11 of that happening.

12 REP. KULA: And are there other states
13 that have gone to this?

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

15 REP. KULA: And are you -- I mean, do
16 you have, you know, some record that you could send
17 to us as far as what their outcome has been along
18 those lines?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Potentially. I
20 certainly could send you -- again, we have two
21 prisons that are operated just like the RFP is laid
22 out already, with nurses and --

23 REP. KULA: And what two prisons are
24 those?

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's Chester and

1 Pine Grove.

2 REP. KULA: Okay. And those are
3 private facilities, basically.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: And we could
5 certainly -- well, the nursing staff is private at
6 those facilities. We don't have any private
7 facilities as it relates to the security function
8 in PA, nor is that on the table. But as far as the
9 medical privatization and what it looks like and
10 what it could potentially look like should we
11 decide to go down that road, I think right here in
12 PA, we have Pine Grove and Chester that we could
13 look at.

14 REP. KULA: And the RFPs that you
15 already received -- and I'm particularly interested
16 in the ones that have submitted an RFP for nursing
17 staff. Could you provide us with a list of who has
18 responded?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: I'm not sure if
20 that's allowed or not under DGS's rules for the RFP
21 process. We'll certainly reach out to DGS and let
22 you know one way or the other, and as soon as we
23 can provide it, provide it.

24 REP. KULA: And would these all be PA
25 companies?

1 SECRETARY WETZEL: That's not likely.

2 REP. KULA: Okay. If you could provide
3 that to the committee, to Chairman Markosek and
4 Adolph, so that we could get that information to
5 the other members.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Again, that would be
7 based on the RFP rules. If we're allowed to, we
8 certainly will.

9 REP. KULA: Okay. And, then, also,
10 what other states have experienced along these
11 lines.

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay. And perhaps
13 John Coyne can follow up with you and get more
14 specific at what your specifically looking for, and
15 we'll do that.

16 REP. KULA: Okay. I thank you.

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you,
20 Representative.

21 I'd like to acknowledge the presence of
22 Rep. Dick Stevenson, who's joined us.

23 The next question will be asked by Rep.
24 Mauree Gingrich.

25 REP. GINGRICH: Thank you,

1 Mr. Chairman.

2 Welcome, gentlemen. Appreciate you
3 being here with us today.

4 You know, together, we're making every
5 effort to ultimately create a sustainable budget.
6 And I really appreciate your interest in doing so.
7 And every effort that you've made with fiscal
8 prudence and the health care, medical care issue is
9 one of them, I know we're talking a lot about that,
10 but that's a significant expense. And we touched
11 on the effort to do so, working with the Department
12 of Welfare, based on some legislative changes we
13 made last year, and we're talking about you
14 experiencing some savings there.

15 I'd like to know more about the -- your
16 initial thoughts on what those savings might be,
17 but, also, how you're working with the Department
18 of Welfare. How is that going? And, then, tell me
19 your thoughts about savings and what they actually
20 might be with what we've done so far.

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Specifically, with
22 the Act 22, we've worked very well with the
23 Department of Public Welfare. The head of our
24 bureau of health care services, Rich Ellers, worked
25 with their staff, because what was required is we

1 had to develop a memorandum of understanding
2 between Department of Corrections and the
3 Department of Public Welfare in order to initiate
4 that. It was passed July 1st -- June 30, effective
5 July 1st.

6 REP. GINGRICH: I remember that. Yes.

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. By September
8 we had the MOU in place, which is light speed for
9 our department. We generally don't move that
10 fast.

11 But the second piece of it, and one of
12 the pieces that really hasn't gotten a whole lot of
13 coverage, is the fact that every county that
14 operates a county jail benefited from that also.
15 So the next step was to develop an MOU so counties
16 could access it without having -- there's sixty-
17 three county jails in PA -- without having sixty-
18 three MOUs with the Department of Public Welfare.

19 So the Department of Corrections is
20 kind of playing the middle person, along with the
21 county commissioners' association, to allow the
22 counties to avail themselves of it.

23 The department -- I'm not sure -- Tim,
24 do we know how much we saved from -- we have 16
25 million of that 21 million in savings next year can

1 be directly attributed --

2 REP. GINGRICH: Sixteen million.

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: -- to Act 22, but,
4 also, I think counties are saving, we've heard
5 anywhere between 300,000 a year, and some county's
6 saving nearly a million a year on that. So it's
7 been a very successful -- and I think that's an
8 example of a partnership between two state
9 agencies, but, also, not forgetting our partners in
10 the county. Because it's all the same taxpayers at
11 the end of the day. So that, in particular, was --
12 we certainly appreciate that piece of legislation,
13 both at the department and also at the county
14 level.

15 REP. GINGRICH: Can't tell how glad I
16 am to hear that, since I played a role in that
17 particular bill. And I have heard from the
18 counties, so I'm happy you brought that up as
19 well.

20 Putting your creative hat on, which I
21 know you wear most of the time, what else can we
22 do? Can we offer you any other assistance in --
23 I'm talking about medical care now; there's a lot
24 of ways that we can look at efficiencies. But is
25 there any way we can play on what we've done here

1 that comes to your mind in a most timely fashion?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: You know, not
3 offhand. I guess I left that creative hat back at
4 the office.

5 REP. GINGRICH: That's all right.
6 You're working hard and I get that.

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: You know, we'll
8 certainly get together and --

9 REP. GINGRICH: Continue to work --

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: -- if there's things
11 along those lines. I know we're putting a lot of
12 emphasis on reentry and the pass-off between the
13 department of corrections and the board, and,
14 certainly, looking at offenders getting access.

15 And we've actually benefited. We've
16 had offenders, the Halfway Back, which is a program
17 that the board initiated, where someone who's on
18 parole supervision and is starting to screw up and
19 have hot urines and starts using drugs or alcohol,
20 gets put back in a community corrections center.
21 We've required our vendors for community
22 corrections to bill MA, if they're able to, for
23 those.

24 And I think that was initiated in
25 January of '11. I think the first year we saved

1 about \$3 million doing that.

2 So, really, in looking at reentry, and
3 when we meet with our partners at parole, we'll
4 look especially at that reentry layer and see if
5 there's anything similar along the line of -- of
6 medical that may avail -- we avail ourselves of.
7 And we can certainly get back to you on that.

8 REP. GINGRICH: Appreciate that.

9 And that leads me to my question about
10 drug and alcohol treatment. How many facilities do
11 you operate that provide drug treatment?

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: The -- all our
13 prisons have drug and alcohol in it.

14 REP. GINGRICH: Each one.

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: And then, also, many
16 of our community correction centers also have a
17 drug and alcohol component.

18 REP. GINGRICH: Does that factor in --
19 or how does that factor in to probation and parole
20 or, really, early release and so on? Is that a
21 factor?

22 MR. POTTEIGER: Well, in looking at
23 that, where we focus on is our technical parole
24 violators. And since 2002 -- 2005-2006, we had a
25 36 percent decrease of offenders going from

1 supervisions into the state correctional
2 institution where we sent them to our technical
3 parole violator centers. And that's a reduction of
4 almost nine hundred thirty offenders per year. And
5 what that does is, they go to their -- they spend
6 anywhere between sixty and ninety days, where in
7 the past, they went to the Department of
8 Corrections and spent anywhere up to fourteen
9 months for violations.

10 So we return them, and then we assess
11 them, and then we put them in our centers, who then
12 streamline them for either alcohol or drug issues,
13 mental health issues. And then we get them --
14 reintegrate them back into our communities.

15 REP. GINGRICH: What percentage, if you
16 have one, what percentage of our inmates are
17 involved in some level of treatment for drug use?

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: I know about three-
19 quarters of the inmates that come in have some drug
20 or alcohol needs. As far as specific percentage on
21 how many are -- actually have programs delivered, I
22 can get to that you.

23 REP. GINGRICH: I would like -- I would
24 really like to know that. That's a large
25 percentage of the population somewhere in that

1 dynamic, but where are they? Are they in need of
2 treatment? Are we providing treatment? Is it
3 something that's handled another way? All of those
4 are cost factors, and I really appreciate what
5 you're doing to help us try to be the most
6 efficient so we can manage a budget that's feasible
7 and sustainable.

8 Thank you both.

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

11 Rep. Scott Conklin.

12 REP. CONKLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Secretary, it's always a pleasure to
14 see you.

15 SECRETARY WETZEL: Good to see you.

16 REP. CONKLIN: Before I go to my line
17 of questioning, it's intriguing me about the nurses
18 and the privatization. Is there a -- was there a
19 problem with the nurses why we -- why there was a
20 decision to look at this?

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Not at all. It's
22 money. Money is -- the sole driving factor to look
23 at this is money. Period.

24 REP. CONKLIN: So there's been no
25 problem with correctional officers' relationship

1 with the nurses? It's -- there's -- it's still a
2 good relationship between the two?

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: I mean, certainly I
4 wouldn't say that we have perfect relationships all
5 over the place, but what specifically drove this
6 approach is money. Period.

7 REP. CONKLIN: You can't give us the
8 names of where the folks are from, but can you tell
9 us how many companies have actually submitted to
10 the RFP?

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: I -- any information
12 I can provide you along those lines, I'll certainly
13 provide you afterwards. I just don't want to jump
14 out of what I'm not supposed to do.

15 REP. CONKLIN: You don't know whether
16 it is one, three, five companies that have shown an
17 interest?

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: I know it's more
19 than three and less than ten. That's about as
20 close as you're going to get me.

21 REP. CONKLIN: That's fair enough.

22 We're -- and I do appreciate that,
23 because it piqued my interest a little bit, and I'm
24 looking forward to the information. Even if you
25 can't give us the names, what I'd like to know,

1 like everyone, are these in-state companies? Are
2 these -- you know, those type of --

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: Um-hum. We'll get
4 you all the information we can.

5 REP. CONKLIN: On the -- how many
6 inmates do you expect to be released early through
7 this initiative?

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, I wouldn't
9 call it early. Okay. Because what we're really
10 focusing on is making sure inmates who are likely
11 to parole actually get hearings.

12 REP. CONKLIN: Okay.

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: And, currently, we
14 have about twenty-four hundred a month scheduled
15 for hearings. The board is able to deliver about
16 eighteen hundred a month. So there's a sixteen --
17 or six hundred inmate discrepancy between how many
18 are ready for -- able to get a hearing and who
19 actually get a hearing.

20 And what we're focusing on, again,
21 working jointly with our partners at the board, is
22 making sure that if someone has done what we asked
23 them do to, they've been well-behaved inmates.
24 They've completed their programming. They've done
25 all the things they've been asked to do, they're

1 not the people who are skipped or rolled over to
2 the next month. So we're trying to do a better job
3 of making decisions. What that will do is get more
4 people who are likely to parole actually get a
5 hearing. So that's not changing -- that's not
6 changing our early release. That's just making our
7 system work better.

8 The second area we're looking at is the
9 process it takes from the time the parole board
10 says, go, you can get out, until they actually get
11 out. A portion of that would be before their
12 minimum, so that's not a time frame we're ever
13 going to affect. But there's a portion of that
14 that is beyond their minimum and the only reason
15 someone's sitting in there is because of -- there's
16 a lot of redundancy between the two systems. And
17 one of the -- perhaps the best processes we've gone
18 through with the board is really looking at what
19 our staff is doing and what the board staff is
20 doing, and there's a lot of redundancy. And beyond
21 that, we collect information in one system and they
22 have it another, so we have to hand it to them.
23 And there's just a bunch of things that make you
24 scratch your head, but when you add all those up,
25 it adds to days.

1 So when you talk about early release,
2 it's not early release, it's just a more effective
3 release and getting people closer to their --
4 released on their minimum, if that's the intent of
5 the board.

6 REP. CONKLIN: As you're aware, I
7 chaired the prison board for many years, and the
8 hundred day lag always drove us crazy.

9 Is there any talk of bringing inmates
10 into communities to finish their time? So inmates
11 that are at the end of their sentence are put into
12 the community to finish their time in a less secure
13 setting.

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. We do that now
15 through our community corrections system, and we
16 have fourteen state-run, another forty contracted
17 community corrections centers.

18 REP. CONKLIN: I'm sorry. I misworded
19 that. Is there any talk about increasing those
20 numbers? That's what I meant.

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Our budget isn't
22 predicated on that, but there's an area that we are
23 looking to increase, and that's specifically
24 through county work release programs.

25 We have a grant for \$1.5 million for

1 that. And what we're specifically looking at
2 doing, is in rural areas, in particular, we don't
3 have community corrections centers. We also know
4 that county work release -- county jail work
5 release programs generally have good relationships
6 with employers and they have access to housing
7 assets that, frankly, the department doesn't have.
8 So we're trying to avail ourselves of those
9 options, so the county work release initiative, we
10 have about seventeen contracts in different process
11 of negotiating. We have four contracts we've
12 signed. So in that aspect, we are trying to push
13 more people back through county work release into
14 their communities.

15 REP. CONKLIN: And just to finish up,
16 one, has the recidivism rate changed in PA?
17 Because I know we just -- we started a few years
18 back to track it. Can you tell us what the rate
19 is? Two, are we still looking about 90 percent of
20 the folks who are entering the state are -- one day
21 will be back in? And have we looked at any long
22 term, to get these folks ready to go back into the
23 community again by giving them some type of tools
24 to use once we release them?

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

1 MR. POTTEIGER: Can I -- sorry about
2 that, Mr. Secretary.

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: Let me hit on the
4 first part.

5 MR. POTTEIGER: All right.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. First of all,
7 our recidivism rate is 44 percent. We do do a
8 significant amount of programing, and 90 percent of
9 the offenders who come in, do go out the back door,
10 but we're always working to identify and deliver
11 programs and approaches, like education, vocational
12 training, that specifically make people less likely
13 to come back.

14 And when we say -- I think, sometimes,
15 we get lost in the term recidivism. We're talking
16 about people getting out and going from being, you
17 know, tax burdens to taxpayers. So we're talking
18 about things like employment. We've worked with
19 Labor and Industry over the past year where Labor
20 and Industry is reviewing the vocational training
21 programs we're offering, to ensure that there's
22 markets for those things.

23 Now, we'll always make license plates,
24 because we need license plates. And we'll always
25 have people, you know, cleaning up the compound,

1 because you always need that. But we are getting
2 better at delivering programs that people can
3 actually get a job.

4 And I'll turn it over to Mike.

5 MR. POTTEIGER: And what we're trying
6 to do is that, we don't create a bridge, a gap
7 between the services that -- when they get released
8 from the DOC until they come under supervision and
9 reintegrate back into the community. Because
10 sometimes the gap in those services sometimes leads
11 to recidivism. And we've been working in
12 collaboration with the DOC through our evidence-
13 based practices, utilizing cognitive behavior
14 trainings, motivational interviewing, offender
15 workshop development specialists, those type of
16 things that are positive influences on our
17 offenders to try to help them reintegrate.

18 Five years ago, our one-year recidivism
19 rate was 26 percent. Last year, it was 17
20 percent. So we look to identify those through our
21 risk needs assessments, and we identify those
22 individuals who have higher risk and needs, and we
23 supervise those according to their needs. So that
24 we're trying to do a more effective and efficient
25 job in streamlining the process from when they're

1 released to when they're under supervision to when
2 they're actually discharged. Which, then, if we do
3 it properly, then that creates less recidivism
4 going back through the system itself.

5 REP. CONKLIN: Thank you.

6 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

7 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

8 Rep. Bear.

9 REP. BEAR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
10 Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining
11 us.

12 Actually want to go back to the medical
13 contract real briefly. So when you said you
14 rebid, and it's the first time, you said, in
15 eight years that you actually bid the contract,
16 what exactly are you talking about? What kind of
17 services?

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: All our medical
19 services.

20 REP. BEAR: So is that, like, for
21 physicians or --

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. It starts at
23 the physician level, so upper-level providers
24 and -- yeah, all the delivery of those medical.
25 And in this case, we bid two ways, one with us

1 operating the -- us employing the nurses, and also,
2 lot two, is potential privatizing the nurses. But
3 we're talking -- we're not talking about dental.
4 We're not talking about mental health. We're not
5 talking about pharmacy. All those are different
6 contracts. This is specifically the medical.

7 REP. BEAR: But for physicians, that's
8 always been outsourced, right? There's never
9 been -- it's always been privatized in that regard?

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't know about
11 forever, but in the recent past, yes, that piece
12 has always been part of this.

13 REP. BEAR: What I want to ask you is,
14 like, in terms of some of the savings that you came
15 up with, in terms of how they treat the patients,
16 is that changed at all, the delivery? Like, at
17 least for the initial diagnosis?

18 The reason I'm asking is, I want to get
19 to the issue of telemedicine, and I didn't know if
20 that was something that was worked in for initial
21 screening of the patients to help reduce the cost
22 of the physician going to the facility to, you
23 know, check the patient out, that kind of thing.

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. We're looking
25 at telemedicine we're using in psychiatry. That's

1 the primary place we're using telemedicine at this
2 point.

3 Our technology infrastructure isn't
4 exactly the most robust. So we're in the process
5 of trying to utilize things like video conferencing
6 for more and more things. We're using it more for
7 court, so counties don't have to transport inmates
8 back. That benefits us and it benefits them.
9 We're also significantly expanding the use for
10 psychiatrists, because some of our -- some of our
11 prisons are in pretty rural areas, and finding
12 psychiatrists for those areas, even in the
13 community, is a challenge; it's certainly a
14 challenge for us.

15 We have not yet looked at expanding it
16 to telemedicine, because, frankly, I don't think we
17 have the infrastructure to do that at this point.
18 It's certainly on the table, and as we further
19 develop our infrastructure, I would hope to
20 continue to move in that direction.

21 REP. BEAR: Yeah. The reason I was
22 asking is, some corporations are going that route,
23 to do initial -- just an initial diagnosis.

24 And I -- the question I have for you,
25 too, is, is there actually a problem with inmates

1 kind of gaming the system? Because I've heard,
2 from talking to people, that they know when to get
3 sick, is there a certain time when, you know, you
4 have to bring someone in and how to get out of the
5 facility if they're faking a certain illness. I
6 didn't know if that would help cut down on some of
7 that.

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, it's one of
9 the key reasons why it makes sense for us to have
10 physicians in the facility, because that screening,
11 whether they need to go out to the hospital or not,
12 that piece, where they can lay their hands on, is
13 certainly done better in person. But, yeah,
14 absolutely. Again, we have 52,000 individuals, and
15 none of them are in the DOC for jaywalking. So we
16 have a lot of people who try to beat the system in
17 all kinds of ways.

18 We have a lot of checks and balances in
19 place that try to prevent that, but it's constant,
20 and it's, again, why it's important that we have
21 medical staff that are qualified and they know what
22 they're doing and properly trained in not just
23 medical aspects but in dealing with this
24 challenging population.

25 REP. BEAR: Yeah. Just because the

1 reason I was asking, because, again, every time
2 something like that happens, I'm sure there's a
3 contractual cost for the visitor -- you know, for
4 the visit of the doctor to the patient.

5 So, anyway, thank you very much.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Rep. Mahoney.

8 REP. MAHONEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Welcome, Mr. Secretary.

10 Just a couple brief updates. The
11 Waynesburg prison that you all were working on for
12 a few years, what's the status with that?

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: We are not going to
14 put inmates in there, because our population has
15 flattened out and we're projecting it to be
16 reduced. And DGS is in the process of negotiating
17 with the leasor or the owner.

18 REP. MAHONEY: How much money did we
19 spend over there in the last three years, I
20 would --

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: I think it's in the
22 \$2-million range. I'll get you the specific after
23 this.

24 REP. MAHONEY: All right.

25 And I took a tour of the Laurel

1 Highlands prison, and I was very impressed on how
2 clean and how well run it was. And they were
3 telling me that you were trying to do something
4 with the gas, bringing the gas up from -- where you
5 would you eliminate the gas bill. Where's that?

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's an ESCO project
7 it's called. It's kind of the new wave of energy
8 efficiency, where we're capturing and reusing gas
9 and also producing electric, I believe.

10 Is that one that's producing electric?
11 Yeah. And also producing electric. And,
12 hopefully, we'll get to a point where it's run and
13 that you can actually sell some electric back to
14 the grid.

15 REP. MAHONEY: How much money is that
16 going to save you on a yearly basis just at that
17 facility? Do you have an estimate?

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: I don't have an
19 estimate offhand. I can send you a projection. We
20 are also doing it at Greensburg. And we're
21 exploring that at a couple facilities.

22 REP. MAHONEY: That's good.

23 But, now, the next thing is, I get a
24 lot of calls, and I think you answered this a
25 little bit, but their release dates, you know, some

1 of these mothers call me about their son was
2 released, his release date was a hundred days ago.

3 Is there any way of trying to tighten
4 that up or --

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: That's exactly what
6 we're focusing a lot of energy on with the board.
7 And, frankly, it's -- you know, the department
8 needs to do a better job on some of that end-stage
9 processing, I'll call it. And we've -- you know,
10 we're really trying to hammer down and make that --
11 again, if someone's supposed to get out and the
12 board says they're okay to get out, and they don't
13 get out simply because we have an inefficient
14 system, that's inexcusable. It's a waste of money,
15 at \$90 a day, and we're really focusing on that.

16 Mike.

17 MR. POTTEIGER: And we're looking to
18 streamline some of that process in -- one thing
19 that we've focused on in the last year is, we're
20 able to get technology out to our field agents who
21 confirm home plans. So they have mobile laptops to
22 where we can get that information, once they are
23 approved to be released, then we can start working
24 on the home plan, to try to get that process in
25 quicker. So that's one thing that, you know, we

1 continue to work with the DOC to try to streamline
2 that aspect.

3 REP. MAHONEY: Thank you.

4 And one more question that's about the
5 nurses. I mean, this isn't the first step of
6 trying to privatize prisons in PA in your process.

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, I know,
8 specifically, the governor said the security
9 function is a function of government and it's not
10 on the table.

11 REP. MAHONEY: And you're not looking
12 at any other privatization in that prison at all?

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: That's not accurate,
14 either. No. Everything else is on the table. And
15 we're going to explore it as we move forward.
16 We're not in a hurry to privatize a bunch of
17 things. It's always going to be a very
18 deliberative process. It's never just going to be
19 about the money, but the money's a piece of it.

20 REP. MAHONEY: It's just amazing to me,
21 if the governor is worried about the protection of
22 people and we keep bringing different contractors
23 into these prisons at different times, I mean, I
24 toured a lot of those prisons, and it's a different
25 environment. And it takes a different type of a

1 person to work in these facilities. I just don't
2 think it's a good idea at all to privatize anything
3 in the prison.

4 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, we have a
5 bunch privatized already, and the ones that you
6 expressed that are working out real well have some
7 of our more privatized staff.

8 REP. MAHONEY: The energy one?

9 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, yes, Laurel
10 Highlands, because we have a lot of nurses and we
11 have a lot of medical staff, and a lot of our
12 medical staff are currently privatized.

13 I mean, listen, I'm with you. You
14 know, our number one job is to protect the
15 community, but also to protect our staff, and
16 bringing in the right people through the door is a
17 very important part of that. And that will be
18 factored in as we explore these things. But when
19 you're looking at an operation that spends \$1.9
20 billion, you have to look and make sure that you're
21 delivering services in a responsible manner but
22 also in a fiscally responsible manner.

23 So I think we have a duty to look at
24 this. And I hope and I expect that as we look at
25 different aspects, we'll be able to find ways to

1 streamline our own aspect so we can compete with
2 that, but we should have to compete outside of the
3 core function of the department.

4 REP. MAHONEY: Thank you very much.
5 And one more question.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: I've heard that
7 before. Right?

8 REP. MAHONEY: I didn't want to bring
9 up Germantown.

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: I appreciate that.

11 REP. MAHONEY: But Senate Bill 100, how
12 much money could that save you, if you have the
13 boot camps go up to forty-eight years old?

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: We're projecting, if
15 the boot camp goes up to forty, it adds about
16 another ninety -- it reduces our overall population
17 in the department by about ninety-seven a day,
18 which is pretty significant.

19 REP. MAHONEY: And how many boot camps
20 do you have running right now?

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: We have one boot
22 camp program. We have for males and females.

23 REP. MAHONEY: And where are they
24 located at?

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's both at

1 Quehanna boot camp.

2 REP. MAHONEY: Okay. Thank you very
3 much.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

7 Rep. Ron Waters.

8 REP. WATERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 I hope you all can hear me. I'm on
10 this mic that doesn't cooperate. But thank you,
11 Mr. Secretary, for being here. And to probation
12 and parole -- I can't see your name from where I
13 sit.

14 MR. POTTEIGER: Mr. Potteiger. That's
15 good.

16 REP. WATERS: Mr. --

17 MR. POTTEIGER: Potteiger.

18 REP. WATERS: Okay. Thank you, too,
19 for being here.

20 And I'm happy that you're -- both
21 departments are being represented at the same
22 time. As my office receives, and I've heard so
23 many of my colleagues also talk about this, so this
24 always seems to be a problem, in terms of -- it
25 comes down to paperwork for people who are

1 incarcerated, and pretty much, most of the stuff
2 has already been addressed.

3 And I can't help but just wondering,
4 you know, in the 21st century, why we still have a
5 system that has so many gaps and problems and
6 deficiencies that, with this technology, it seems
7 as though it's not being utilized in a way that
8 would be cost savings, and -- because I've had a
9 chance to visit many of the SCIs, too, as my
10 friend, as a visitor, and go in and talk and to
11 talk to many of the wardens or superintendents in
12 the facilities.

13 And many of them say pretty much the
14 same thing, that inside the institution, there are
15 people who are there that they don't need to be
16 there, by their opinion, their assessment. They
17 just don't need to be there. Some of it, I know,
18 is because of legislation, and some of it is
19 because of paperwork or technical parole violators
20 that have been sent back to the department as a
21 result of someone making an error in what they were
22 supposed to be doing while on probation or parole,
23 and they end up going back into the system and
24 losing everything that they had already started to
25 work on and build.

1 And I'm happy to see that the probation
2 and parole is here, because many times the
3 department's argument has been -- and this is even
4 prior to Secretary Wetzel -- that the department
5 doesn't have a choice in the matter when someone
6 gets a technical violation. They send them back
7 there. And they just can't say, well, we can't
8 take them back because I know this person and they
9 was here before. They just have to open the door
10 and take them.

11 And the philosophy, which I hope that
12 maybe you can address some, is about -- I know
13 there used to be a philosophy of trail them, nail
14 them, and jail them with probation.

15 MR. POTTEIGER: Representative, you're
16 correct.

17 REP. WATERS: Is that correct?

18 MR. POTTEIGER: You're correct.

19 REP. WATERS: Trail them, nail them,
20 and jail them.

21 MR. POTTEIGER: That's one term, yeah.

22 REP. WATERS: You can tell me the other
23 one if you want to.

24 MR. POTTEIGER: You know -- but, no,
25 that used to be a philosophy. I think I've been in

1 probation and parole -- I have been in probation
2 and parole for over twenty-four years. I think
3 when I came into the system, unfortunately, that's
4 the way it was. It was how can we build more
5 prisons, how can we institutionalize more offenders
6 by locking them up, throw away the key, so to say,
7 and not doing a better job of transitioning them
8 from the Department of Corrections or county prison
9 back into the communities successfully.

10 I think the board, since -- and most
11 county agencies have looked at changing that
12 philosophy, because, right now, we have fiscal
13 challenges, obviously. We have to look at doing
14 things smarter, more efficient.

15 And in 2005, 2006, the board started
16 utilizing evidence-based practices, and we started
17 focusing on individuals in not only breaking the
18 recidivism but breaking the family cycle of
19 recidivism. Because so many times, in our field,
20 do we not only supervise the father, we supervise
21 the son, and then the grandfather. And then what
22 happens, unfortunately, then you have grandparents
23 raising their children because they're
24 incarcerated.

25 REP. WATERS: In jail.

1 MR. POTTEIGER: So we have refocused
2 our efforts through evidence-based practices, and I
3 can respect -- before it used to be one violation,
4 incarcerate them, let them spend between fourteen
5 months to two years in the institution before
6 they're released again. But now, under the board's
7 direction, with evidence-based practices, there has
8 been an average of up to five violations before we
9 take them back.

10 And even before we take them back, we
11 have the Halfway Back that we utilize. We created
12 our technical parole violator center in 2010. We
13 just expanded that. Wernersville is going to be
14 opened up by the end of this month.

15 Correct, Secretary?

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

17 MR. POTTEIGER: So we went from five
18 technical parole violation centers now to six.
19 That can house up to three hundred seventy-five
20 more offenders in those type of settings, which is
21 more of an alcohol and drug rehabilitative position
22 while institutionalized, in trying to keep them in
23 their communities and doing a more effective and
24 efficient job of reintegrating them back into their
25 communities.

1 So, we understand the needs -- I mean,
2 the concerns, but we are addressing those through
3 our evidence-based practice techniques and through
4 our new philosophy.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: And I would just
6 add, that since -- especially since Acting Chairman
7 White took over in July and then Mike took over a
8 month ago, I have utmost faith. We've made
9 significant progress. A lot of what you're talking
10 about, frankly, came down to the fact that the
11 board and the Department of Corrections was unable
12 to work together or unwilling to work together.
13 And that's not the case.

14 And I've also specifically seen, and
15 certainly I complain as much as anybody, at times,
16 about parole violators. We've seen significant
17 progress, especially in the past several months at
18 just trying to find a way to process them better
19 and put them in the parole violation centers, which
20 are very successful.

21 But, again, when they get brought back
22 to us, some of our processes kick in, and it's only
23 ninety days there, but it takes us two months to
24 get them there or three months to get them there.
25 So that -- what could be ninety days takes six

1 months. And we own part of that and so does the
2 board.

3 So I'll certainly vouch for Mike and
4 for the board that we've made progress. There's a
5 commitment, certainly a new direction, and there's
6 a commitment from the board, and we've seen that.
7 And a lot of the department's budget is predicated
8 on a reduction in population, and that is quite
9 specifically a leap of faith with the board of
10 probation and parole.

11 REP. WATERS: And I'm so happy to hear
12 that, that the two departments are working
13 together. They service the same population of
14 people, for the most part. And for them to work
15 separately as a divorced couple almost, you know,
16 it doesn't make sense, because taxpayers will end
17 up having to bear the financial cost of the
18 decisions that are made because of the lack of
19 communications.

20 And this is -- I even had a legislation
21 that would combine the two. I know in some states
22 the Department of Correction and probation and
23 parole are combined. They still have their
24 separate independence, but because of their
25 relationship, they have better outcomes in terms of

1 what kind of people are we turning back to society
2 and monitoring and supervising, to make sure that
3 you -- you try to keep them on track, which
4 I believe would be a great way for probation and
5 parole to handle them, to handle people. Because,
6 I believe, if you are being measured on your
7 success with reintegrating people back into society
8 and back into law-abiding society, and for them to
9 be productive, law-abiding citizens who we won't
10 mind having as neighbors, I believe will be the
11 outcome, plus they're productive citizens, as you
12 said earlier, Mr. Secretary, and no longer tax
13 burdens but tax producers.

14 And so the probation and parole
15 officers, how often are they trained or retrained
16 or evaluated in terms of how they are handling
17 their job performance?

18 MR. POTTEIGER: We have forty hours of
19 annual training to upgrade. We have an eight-week
20 BTA for new agents that are hired; they go through
21 training process. But through the everyday type of
22 supervision, we have supervisors who evaluate their
23 job perform almost on a daily basis, to ensure that
24 the agents are carrying out the philosophy and the
25 mission of the board.

1 REP. WATERS: And with the Department
2 of Corrections, Mr. Secretary, how often are the
3 correctional officers trained? I know that we've
4 had some -- some isolated cases that came up on the
5 radar screen, for instance, SCI Pittsburgh, which
6 was -- but we hear inmates all the time complain
7 about the way that the correctional officers, not
8 all of them -- I see you got a couple guys over
9 there. I'm sure you --

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. Watch
11 yourself.

12 REP. WATERS: I don't plan on -- what
13 prisons do you guys work at? I don't plan going to
14 visit that prison anytime soon.

15 But the -- but they have complained
16 about the -- for instance, when they file a
17 complaint about how they're being treated, the --

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Grievance system.

19 REP. WATERS: Grievances is given to a
20 correctional officer, who might be the one the
21 grievance is being filed against, and good luck
22 with that getting to where it needs go to.

23 SECRETARY WETZEL: Actually, that's not
24 accurate. And one of things we've ensured is that
25 we have grievance boxes everywhere. So inmates

1 have the ability to put the grievance in the box
2 themselves, even in our RHUs, and beyond that, the
3 only person with a key to that is the
4 superintendent's assistant, who physically goes
5 around and collects it.

6 So I heard that complaint, too. And
7 we've taken steps to ensure that.

8 When you talk about this, training is a
9 big piece of that. And we will continue to focus
10 on training, which we offer yearly training, also
11 similar to our partners at the board. But, also,
12 we have a -- our office of special intelligence and
13 investigation, who investigates, and we're really
14 looking and, I believe, have improved our process
15 to be responsive to abuse allegations. Every abuse
16 allegation is fully investigated.

17 Beyond that, we've instituted a 1-800
18 number for -- inmates can call from the phones on
19 the housing unit anonymously. We've issued --
20 instituted a number that the public can call. They
21 can easily --

22 REP. WATERS: Excuse me. I'm sorry,
23 Mr. Secretary. Did this happen during your
24 leadership?

25 SECRETARY WETZEL: We've re-instituted

1 some of this stuff in the past year, certainly.
2 Some of this stuff was preexisting and we just, I
3 felt like, needed to remarket it. We have a 1-800
4 number that the public can call. We also have a
5 1-800 number that staff can call and anonymously
6 report things. We also get e-mails to the website,
7 and every complaint is fully investigated. We have
8 a tracking system that's centrally located in
9 OSII.

10 And so I feel like we have the checks
11 and balances in place, and they make the decision
12 whether it's the type of allegation that should be
13 investigated locally or the type of investigation
14 that should be investigated centrally by people who
15 aren't working at those facilities.

16 So while we certainly need to improve,
17 I think we've moved significantly forward in how
18 that grievance system and also making sure every
19 individual incarcerated in the Department of
20 Corrections has access to report abuse, because
21 it's something we don't tolerate.

22 These guys back here feel the same way
23 that you feel. If we have a staff member behaving
24 inappropriately, it puts everybody in jeopardy. We
25 don't tolerate it. And I think you brought SCI

1 Pittsburgh, I think our actions speaking very
2 loudly, that the department was the one who
3 discovered it. The department is one who
4 investigated it, and we certainly responded swiftly
5 and harshly.

6 REP. WATERS: And you absolutely did.
7 And I even noticed it in this year's budget
8 proposal, the governor did not offer any increase
9 for the Department of Corrections, which is a rare
10 sight for budget proposals.

11 I believe that, under your leadership,
12 that changes have already taken place as with what
13 has been said earlier. This is about public
14 safety. This is not about protecting somebody who
15 is -- who belongs in jail. This is not the
16 argument. The argument is that 90 percent or
17 better of the people incarcerated will be coming
18 back to society. And what kind of person is going
19 to move back to my neighborhood is of severe
20 interest to me.

21 And if we get could get, for the costs
22 that it takes to lock a person up, which is pretty
23 close to a college education tuition, I believe
24 that the least the taxpayers should be expecting is
25 some positive outcome returning back, because we

1 all want our streets to be safe places.

2 And I know that you have already
3 demonstrated some cost savings already, including
4 making sure that people don't get to go and eat two
5 or three times at -- I believe you say, \$20,000 the
6 first month at one place you instituted it.

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct.

8 REP. WATERS: And you're going to do it
9 at other places.

10 SECRETARY WETZEL: We're doing it
11 system-wide.

12 And what the Representative's referring
13 to is, we had inmates -- some of our new
14 prototypical facilities will have two or three chow
15 halls, so they'll go to one and then go to
16 another. And -- so we issued meal tickets, as of
17 January 2nd. It was an idea that came from one of
18 our facilities, Superintendent Harlow at CSI
19 Albion.

20 In many places, we saved as much as
21 20,000 a month, and seven hundred meals a day by
22 just accounting for -- making sure we know that
23 only we're going to serve the number of meals of
24 the inmate we have, and what -- where you save
25 money is that we're producing less meals. Because

1 the last thing you want to do in a prison is run
2 out of food. So the kitchen staff is responsible
3 and makes more food, so we've instituted that.

4 And, again, listen, we have a good team
5 at the Department of Corrections. And I think when
6 you talk about increasing public safety, certainly
7 that leadership comes from the governor on down.
8 And it's consistent with parole and with us, that
9 we're all committed to have better outcomes.

10 One of the better outcomes is spending
11 less money. But one of the better outcomes is
12 reducing that recidivism rate, making people more
13 likely to succeed when they get out. And that's
14 where -- that's what this administration is
15 committed to, and I think this budget backs that
16 up.

17 REP. WATERS: I think with this -- with
18 your installation as superintendent -- or
19 secretary -- I'm sorry -- secretary of Corrections
20 speaks volumes in terms of the statements that you
21 just made. And I look forward to continually
22 working with you in your efforts in -- for public
23 safety and with the new -- Mike -- I'll just say
24 Mike right now -- in terms of how we can better
25 supervise people who are under your care.

1 Thank you.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

5 Rep. John Sabatina.

6 REP. SABATINA: Thank you,

7 Mr. Chairman.

8 And thank you, Secretary, thank you,
9 Chairman, for your testimony today.

10 I have a couple of brief questions.
11 First of all, the idea of deporting nonviolent
12 offenders, is that something you can do now or is
13 that something that requires legislation for the --

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Requires
15 legislation.

16 REP. SABATINA: Okay.

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: And we're, along
18 with our partners at parole, we're drafting up what
19 we think the language is. Again, the
20 administration really sees Senate Bill 100 as the
21 vehicle that we can insert whatever comes out of
22 the justice reinvestment initiative and this, also,
23 into a nice, cogent piece of legislation that
24 addresses a myriad of things, including deporting
25 nonviolent illegal immigrants.

1 And how the process currently works is,
2 if we get a nonviolent illegal immigrant into our
3 system, they serve whatever time they're supposed
4 to serve, and then they're eventually paroled to
5 their detainer. We're just looking to front end
6 that process and parole -- give them a conditional
7 parole to a detainer. The condition would be that
8 they get deported. Right? So if they don't get
9 deported, if something gets sidetracked with that
10 process, they come back to us.

11 And, also, we would suggest that
12 there's some enhancement on the back end, that if
13 they sneak back in, which we know happens from time
14 to time, and they get rearrested in the state of
15 PA, we enhance those sentences. And we're talking
16 about a relatively small number of inmates. We're
17 talking about two hundred sixty-five inmates
18 sitting in the department today. We're talking
19 about sixty-five additional a year. But two
20 hundred sixty-five inmates is a housing unit, which
21 generally means six officers and somewhere between
22 a million and a half and two and a half million
23 dollars.

24 So if we can reduce by that population,
25 close the housing unit, that's \$2 million that's

1 back that can be spent elsewhere. So that's --
2 that's the whole story. Probably more than you
3 want to hear.

4 REP. SABATINA: No. That's good.
5 Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

6 MR. POTTEIGER: If I could just --

7 REP. SABATINA: I'm sorry.

8 MR. POTTEIGER: I just wanted to
9 comment, just one thing that he left out. They
10 were nonviolent offenders. That's what we were
11 targeting for this Senate bill.

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah, that's --

13 MR. POTTEIGER: Correct.

14 REP. SABATINA: My second question has
15 to do with overtime. And I see the projections for
16 overtime is \$60 million.

17 Can you explain to me how -- how you
18 incur overtime? How overtime is incurred in the
19 system, and how you can reduce it?

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. There's a
21 couple ways overtime is incurred. One is
22 unexpected event, and that can be defined a myriad
23 of ways in the Department of Corrections, but think
24 of something as somebody having an event that
25 causes them to get sent out to the hospital. With

1 the level of offender we have, we don't just send
2 them out and say, Give us a call when you're done.
3 We have to send staff with them. Generally, two
4 staff, sometimes three. So that's something that
5 you don't plan for. So we don't put extra staff on
6 our roster to sit around and wait for someone get
7 to get sent to the hospital.

8 Obviously, there could be more serious
9 unexpected events. That's one thing that drives
10 it.

11 Another thing that drives it is leave
12 usage. And, generally, planned leave usage doesn't
13 really have a big impact on us, but unplanned leave
14 usage, especially call offs, especially last-minute
15 call offs, those two categories combined are
16 really -- provided the bulk of overtime.

17 Now, we still have, sometimes, well-
18 planned events, well-planned shakedowns, and those
19 kinds of things, where we use overtime, but I
20 believe that's a good use of overtime.

21 But especially the call-off level --
22 for instance, when the Commonwealth shifted from
23 FML to what's in place now, SPF, it expanded
24 what -- the federal mandate to allow for people to
25 be eligible for that earlier and give individuals

1 more flexibility. In a twenty-four/seven
2 operation, that really has an impact on the amount
3 of unscheduled leave we have. And, ultimately, it
4 leads to that 60 million in overtime.

5 And then, the third thing is, again, a
6 lack of technological infrastructure to do a great
7 job of managing it and getting reports and doing
8 that. And that's something that's part of this
9 budget, that we're going to do a better job of
10 centralizing the management of overtime management
11 to reduce those costs.

12 REP. SABATINA: Gentlemen, thank you
13 for your answers. Keep up the good work.

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

15 MR. POTTEIGER: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

17 Rep. Glen Grell.

18 REP. GRELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman Potteiger, welcome.

20 Congratulations. Best of luck in your new
21 position.

22 MR. POTTEIGER: Thank you.

23 REP. GRELL: I'm pleased -- very
24 pleased to see that the board and the department
25 are working so closely to address some of these

1 challenges and problems. My question, however, is
2 for Secretary Wetzel. And it piggybacks on an
3 earlier question where you were talking about food
4 service.

5 Could you tell us a little more about
6 how the department provides food service and
7 whether there's an opportunity there to do it in a
8 different way or perhaps to partner or
9 privatization or outsource or whatever you want to
10 call it?

11 I know some other states have done
12 this, and at least in the magazines the legislators
13 get, Indiana seems to have gotten some good press,
14 at least, on their efforts to privatize food
15 service.

16 Is that something that you're looking
17 at? And if so, what kind of criteria would you use
18 to -- to evaluate whether that's a direction you
19 might want to explore?

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay. How we
21 deliver food service is -- I mean, we order the
22 food bulk through the DGS ordering process. We
23 have storage, where the food is stored, from cold
24 storage to dry storage and those things.

25 And, then, the kitchen, actual

1 operation, is managed by staff, and -- but a lot of
2 the work is done by inmates who are employed to do
3 that.

4 REP. GRELL: Any idea what percentage
5 is staff versus inmate?

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. It would
7 be -- I don't know -- probably three or four staff
8 and probably thirty or forty inmates. It's
9 primarily the labor piece. Staff are entitled
10 supervisors. So they're supervising, directing,
11 and also training, because food service jobs are
12 jobs offenders can get when they get out, so that's
13 a part of working in the kitchen. But that's
14 basically how it's delivered.

15 There is some talk, and that's an area
16 that we will likely explore at some point. There's
17 a lot of states who have done that with, frankly,
18 mixed results, some better than others. Certainly,
19 a lot of those companies have a good marketing
20 department.

21 And -- but, you know, again, as I said
22 earlier with privatization, there's things you have
23 to factor in other than costs, and we'll do that.
24 But, as a department, we should be able to compete,
25 and -- when it comes to financial, and if -- we

1 should be able to deliver it as good as or at the
2 same cost or similar cost as a vendor, because,
3 really, what the vendors do is they use the same --
4 generally, close to the same amount of staff and do
5 a better job with portion control and purchasing
6 and how much they keep on storage and those kinds
7 of things.

8 We are, as a department, pursuing
9 what's called supply chain transformation. And
10 it's really looking at the entire supply chain
11 process with both -- with food service, laundry, as
12 well as transportation, which is another area
13 where -- you know, we move about nine hundred
14 people a month. So those are all areas that we're
15 looking at, specifically at supply chain, how we
16 can function more like a UPS as opposed to a DOC.

17 So that's the process we're doing right
18 now. That -- we're going through the RFP process
19 now. We anticipate awarding that this spring and
20 really focusing on how we can deliver food service
21 better.

22 Michigan, in particular, saved 10
23 percent on their food service budget by going
24 through this process and doing a better job of
25 delivering food service with their staff this way.

1 But at some point, we'll absolutely -- that's
2 something that's on the table. So at some point
3 we'll structure an RFP and compare the two.

4 REP. GRELL: The RFP, though, that you
5 mentioned, that's for the purchasing of the food
6 itself?

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: That's for looking
8 at the whole supply chain.

9 REP. GRELL: Oh, okay. For evaluating
10 your -- those three areas that you mentioned.

11 SECRETARY WETZEL: -- evaluating and
12 initiating changes.

13 REP. GRELL: Okay. So that would be
14 the first step in evaluating whether this is
15 something that might bring some efficiency to the
16 department?

17 SECRETARY WETZEL: Correct. With --
18 yes.

19 REP. GRELL: Okay. Thanks very much.

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

21 MR. POTTEIGER: Thank you.

22 REP. GRELL: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

23 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

24 Rep. Cherelle Parker.

25 REP. PARKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 And Chairman Potteiger and Secretary
2 Wetzel, welcome. And thank you both so much for
3 being here.

4 Mr. Chairman, you, in your response to
5 one of the questions, sort of struck a cord with my
6 frame of questioning. And it was in regards to
7 incarceration being cyclical and generational in
8 nature, and you described that in one of your
9 responses.

10 And, Secretary Wetzel, thank you,
11 because I know you've been working with the PA
12 Prison Society. Both of your departments have been
13 a part of the joint state government commission,
14 studying effects of incarceration on children,
15 which was worked on in a bipartisan manner; both
16 Senator Greenleaf and I introduced joint
17 resolutions. It was supported by both of our
18 chairmen here in the House, Caltagirone and
19 Marsico, and we finally had received results of
20 that report.

21 In addition to that, we felt, in the
22 beginning, like we were wolves, crying in the wild,
23 when we first started working on this issue,
24 because it hadn't received a lot of attention. And
25 lo and behold, 2012, Miss America is selected, and

1 her platform is the need for support for children
2 with incarceration -- incarcerated parents across
3 the United States.

4 And so with that in mind, one of the
5 things that the report did do, along with the
6 committee's recommendations, is come up with ideas
7 that could assist all of the respective
8 stakeholders in supporting this particular
9 constituency. And some of the ideas were, for
10 example, data collections along with a uniform
11 protocol regarding arrests when children are in the
12 household or in the surroundings when a parent is
13 incarcerated.

14 Is that something that both of your
15 departments will continue working on with us as we
16 work on actually getting some of those legislative
17 initiatives enacted here in the state, along with
18 in our respective counties?

19 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes. And we are
20 reviewing the report -- we got a little preview of
21 it. So we're in process of reviewing it, but we've
22 worked with Big Brothers and Big Sisters. We did
23 an initiative with them last year. We've worked
24 with Dr. Goode, Namichi -- Amachi, Philadelphia,
25 and also Amachi, Pittsburgh.

1 So as an administration, again, from
2 the governor on down, we're committed to -- we're
3 committed to not just look at those incarcerated
4 but the system impacts. Because, understand that
5 there's a cost when someone gets incarcerated
6 throughout the system, and one of those costs is
7 the potential that their family members, and
8 children, especially, dependent children, have the
9 potential of being incarcerated.

10 So we're very committed to that
11 notion and to work with whoever is interested in
12 doing a better job of addressing the needs of
13 children of incarcerated parents.

14 MR. POTTEIGER: And our agents are
15 doing a very effective and efficient job, and
16 understanding that a number of the offenders that
17 we supervise across systems of care. And that they
18 are not only under supervision with the board, but
19 they also have maybe another family member or child
20 involved with Children and Youth services.

21 So we have been educating our agents
22 through our evidence-based practices, who are doing
23 an excellent job in the day-to-day supervision of
24 our offenders. I'm up here, but my agents do the
25 day-to-day job every day. And we focus on the

1 family structure and trying to bring the family
2 structure back through those type of programs,
3 whether it be family group conferencing, truancy
4 initiatives that are going on. So we will remain
5 focused on that and reintegrating them properly as
6 a family structure back into the community.

7 REP. PARKER: Mr. Chairman, you come to
8 my second question in regards to the importance of
9 family reunification as it relates to
10 reintegration. And one of the things that the
11 department has done successfully has been this
12 notion of virtual visitation that we have
13 established in the city of Philadelphia. I know
14 the PA Prison Society, they used to administer the
15 program for some time. I think another contractor
16 is working on it now.

17 But when we had an official release of
18 the report in the city, one of the responses that I
19 received is that when we have these locations
20 established, the children of people who are
21 incarcerated are further branded and ashamed to go
22 into some of these particular locations, because in
23 communities, these locations become known as, this
24 is the place where you go to have virtual
25 visitation with your mother or father or someone

1 that's in prison.

2 And I wanted to know, are other
3 facilities -- I know there are extreme security
4 rules and regs that you have to abide by in that
5 situation, but is the idea of maybe focusing some
6 attention on using some of our churches or places
7 that have multiple sort of functions, whereupon the
8 stigma that's attached to that consistency may not
9 be there? Is that something we can possibly
10 explore? Or give a little caution, raises red
11 flags?

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, again, our
13 technology infrastructure is less than robust. So
14 a lot of -- the main limitation on the use of video
15 visitation is just the access, because we generally
16 only have one video visitation unit per facility,
17 and not even every facility has them. So I don't
18 think we're there yet.

19 I think at some point, if we could put
20 some checks and balances in place that we would be
21 concerned about, I think we are certainly committed
22 to do that.

23 But I also think that we've taken some
24 significant, proactive steps in the family
25 reunification position, specifically with SCI

1 Phoenix on the grounds of Graterford, where we're
2 putting, for the first time in the history of the
3 department, a female reentry housing unit on the
4 grounds of Graterford.

5 We know that nearly a third of our
6 offenders come from the southeast corner of PA.
7 And the nearest female facility is SCI Muncy, which
8 is above Williamsport. So we have about a
9 two-hundred-bed housing unit outside the fence,
10 obviously, self-contained for females reentering
11 the southeast area. And what we plan to target is
12 the last nine months to a year. And we are very
13 actively out in the faith communities, especially
14 in Philadelphia, trying to engage faith
15 communities, because we'd really like to see a
16 mentor for each female returning to the
17 Philadelphia area.

18 The housing unit itself is designed
19 with things like extended visit hours and extended
20 access to their children in mind, because we
21 understand that if a custodial mother, going back
22 into a household where she's been gone for a while,
23 that brings other dynamics into the mix. We're
24 also making significant progress with that group,
25 in programming them specific to female-need areas.

1 So we're with you and we're working
2 towards that.

3 REP. PARKER: And, finally,
4 Mr. Secretary, let me ask, I was just watching a
5 television show the other day, and I can't remember
6 what show or what station it was, but there was an
7 issue regarding telephone service. And it made me
8 think about the Department of Corrections. But it
9 was in regards to our military, and I can't
10 remember which specific branch. But our military
11 would stop in the safe fly zone, for example, and I
12 forget what country, but they would actually have
13 telephones there, and this would be the last stop
14 before members of this particular unit could
15 reach -- they could reach out to their families.
16 They could communicate with them.

17 And one, the telephone that served --
18 company that was providing the services and sort of
19 owned the phones, they weren't allowing our
20 military officers to use calling cards. They had
21 to use credit cards.

22 In addition to that, they showcased,
23 like, a five-second message that a military officer
24 actually left on his home telephone, cost \$45. And
25 I thought, wow, these are the men and women on the

1 front line, helping to protect our great country.
2 I wonder what happens in the private sector, even
3 in our correctional institutions that rely
4 extremely heavy as it relates on, as you mentioned,
5 the importance of reunification with the family,
6 they rely heavily on telephone usage.

7 Do we sort of monitor and compare,
8 nationally, what the cost is? And what do we do to
9 ensure that that is a vehicle that remains
10 affordable for our Pennsylvanians who,
11 unfortunately, have a family member who is
12 incarcerated and they're doing their best to stay
13 connected with that family member?

14 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah. We're very, I
15 would say, vigilant in making sure that our phone
16 rates do not go through the roof, because we are
17 committed to that, keeping the connection with the
18 community, especially for the offenders who are
19 going to return back home one day. But there is a
20 cost to those things. And so --

21 REP. PARKER: But, Mr. Secretary, you
22 don't think it's, like, \$40 for five seconds, do
23 you?

24 SECRETARY WETZEL: We're no nowhere
25 close to that.

1 REP. PARKER: Oh, okay. Okay. Okay.

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Our inmates are
3 getting a bargain if our military is paying 45
4 bucks for a five-second phone call.

5 REP. PARKER: Okay. Okay.

6 SECRETARY WETZEL: But one of the
7 things with our -- the way our phone contract is
8 structured, is that the profits from that get
9 reinvested into the inmate general welfare fund, so
10 it's used for things that inmates receive, from
11 recreation equipment to, in some cases, programs.
12 So I think that you're getting a pretty good
13 investment. And we do monitor.

14 And that most recently, I think a year
15 and a half ago, we negotiated to use debit cards
16 and get a discount for debit calling, if offenders
17 use debit calling. So we're constantly monitoring
18 that.

19 REP. PARKER: Thank you both, and I
20 look forward to working with you.

21 And thank you, Chairman Adolph.

22 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

23 Rep. Steve Samuelson.

24 REP. SAMUELSON: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chairman.

1 My question is on personnel costs, a
2 follow-up question on the overtime, and then also
3 your efforts to address salary compression.

4 Now, I know you testified that the
5 overall budget for the Department of Corrections is
6 level funded. No change in the overall bottom line
7 for the department.

8 Within the line items of the
9 department, in your budget presentation, you note
10 that in the Department of Corrections, there's a
11 \$78-million increase in personnel costs, 8.2
12 million of that set aside for the salary
13 compression issue, and then other associated
14 personnel costs. So, obviously, within the
15 department, other line items are going down as
16 personnel goes up by 78 million.

17 First question is on the overtime,
18 which I know you've discussed with Rep. Sabatina,
19 the \$60-million figure, is that -- how does that
20 compare to last year and also the last couple of
21 years?

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: I can't tell you
23 that, offhand. I know it's -- I think it's
24 relatively in the same ballpark, but I'll get you
25 specifically the past five years as a follow-up

1 document, to give you -- but, keep in mind, that's
2 just -- not just correctional officers, that's all
3 overtime for all staff.

4 REP. SAMUELSON: Okay. And that would
5 be helpful, any kind of data you have on exactly
6 what the overtime costs have been in recent years.

7 SECRETARY WETZEL: Okay. Yeah.

8 REP. SAMUELSON: Now, salary
9 compression, I know you're talking about when
10 corrections officers, with overtime, might actually
11 be very close to supervisory personnel within the
12 department.

13 SECRETARY WETZEL: Actually, we're
14 talking about correctional officers, without
15 overtime, being over supervisory staff.

16 REP. SAMUELSON: Okay. Without even
17 discussing overtime.

18 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yeah.

19 REP. SAMUELSON: The salary scale for
20 corrections officers actually goes higher than the
21 salary scale for a supervisor staff?

22 SECRETARY WETZEL: They don't -- they
23 have different scales. Correctional officer's a
24 twenty-seven-step scale; the correctional manager's
25 a twenty-step scale. That, coupled with the freeze

1 for managerial employees over the past eight years,
2 have created that -- actually not just compression,
3 decompression, in some cases.

4 REP. SAMUELSON: So in some cases, the
5 highest step on the salary scale for a corrections
6 officer is actually higher than the supervisory
7 employee.

8 SECRETARY WETZEL: I wouldn't -- in
9 some cases we have line employees who are making
10 more than the people who are supervising them.
11 When you say steps at the end of the scale, the
12 problem is that the correctional managers aren't
13 getting -- aren't continuing to move out the scale,
14 so we never get to a point where they're both at
15 the end of scale and are they even or not. We
16 can't even get to that point.

17 REP. SAMUELSON. In your testimony, you
18 say, We've begun addressing the salary compression.
19 Exactly how have you done that? Are you providing
20 increases to the managers?

21 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yes.

22 REP. SAMUELSON: If so, what level of
23 increase? Is it a set figure? Is it a percentage
24 increase? What's the highest increase that you've
25 been giving to a manager to try to address this

1 issue?

2 SECRETARY WETZEL: Well, we haven't
3 given any yet. We're in the process, along with
4 OA, of identifying what the need is, and what we'd
5 begun to address it by is to make sure that we
6 structurally fix it. So we're not just going to
7 give a step to a bunch of managers and say, okay,
8 we've addressed it. We're functionally and
9 structurally fixing it, so two pay scales match up,
10 so this isn't recreated again.

11 And there's only a select group. And
12 it ends up being about two-thirds of our managers,
13 but we're really focused on most of our managers on
14 the CM scale, which is the correctional managers
15 scale, which are basically the boots on the ground
16 in the facilities. And everybody's going to be
17 looked at individually to where they would be on
18 the new scale and where they're currently at, and
19 then we're going to make adjustments based on
20 that.

21 So once we have that created, I can
22 certainly provide that to you.

23 REP. SAMUELSON: Okay.

24 And then how many managers would be
25 involved in this effort? I know you've put a

1 figure of 8.2 million of the amount of money
2 involved. How many managers would that be?

3 SECRETARY WETZEL: It's going
4 somewhere in the ballpark of a thousand, give
5 or take. With the number of employees we
6 have, sometimes we have vacant positions and
7 the like.

8 REP. SAMUELSON: Well, \$8 million,
9 a thousand people, that's about \$8,000 per
10 manager. Is that in the ballpark of what
11 you're looking at?

12 SECRETARY WETZEL: That would be
13 the ballpark, yeah.

14 REP. SAMUELSON: Okay. But you're
15 developing a comprehensive study of the issue.

16 SECRETARY WETZEL: Yep.

17 REP. SAMUELSON: All right. Thank
18 you for your answers.

19 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

21 MR. POTTEIGER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

23 Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary, I
24 want to thank you for your testimony today and
25 looking forward to working with you over the

1 next several months, as we get through this
2 budget process.

3 And keep up the good work,
4 gentlemen.

5 SECRETARY WETZEL: Thank you.

6 MR. POTTEIGER: Thank you for your
7 time.

8 CHAIRMAN ADOLPH: Thank you.

9 Well, Appropriations Committee, I just
10 want to let you know that we are on time. And the
11 next meeting will take place at 3 o'clock, and it
12 will be DEP.

13 Thank you.

14 (Whereupon, the hearing concluded
15 at 2:58 p.m.)

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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

2 I HEREBY CERTIFY that I was
3 present upon the hearing of the above-entitled
4 matter and there reported stenographically the
5 proceedings had and the testimony produced;
6 and I further certify that the foregoing is a
7 true and correct transcript of my said
8 stenographic notes.

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12 BRENDA J. PARDUN, RPR
13 Court Reporter
14 Notary Public
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