



PENNSYLVANIA STATE CORRECTIONS OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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Patrolling the Toughest Blocks in the State

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House Judiciary Committee
Prison Closings
Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2013

Good morning Chairman and Committee Members.

My name is Jason Bloom and I am the western region Vice President of the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association (PSCOA). I am speaking on behalf of approximately 10,500 members, but specifically the members working at SCI-Greensburg.

The closings of both SCI-Greensburg and SCI-Cresson not only took us by surprise, it took the employees there by surprise. It took the communities by surprise. It even took you by surprise.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) did not have the forethought to let anyone know. In fact, the DOC treated this announcement like they were guarding top-secret launch codes. Then, after the announcement, the Department expected members to make life-altering decisions in the blink of an eye, even though they sat on this information for a lengthy period of time.

If they were unable to transfer to one of the institutions somewhat close, our members at SCI-Greensburg had to make hard decisions after answering difficult questions:

Am I going to stay employed with the DOC?

Can I find housing at SCI-Benner?

Can I sell my house?

What are the schools like where I am moving?

Are there jobs available for my spouse?

Who will care for my sick parents or other family members?

Ladies and gentlemen, these are legitimate questions that are difficult for working families to answer in the best of circumstances.

There has to be a better way. If the DOC had come to the PSCOA months ago our members would have had ample time to look at options. Is it too much to ask to treat employees who work such dangerous jobs with respect? I don't think so.

There is a new prison being built at Graterford. Will the state just replace the old Graterford? Or, as we've seen here, will they close other prisons and fold their populations into this new one?

Under the current system, no one will know until it's too late.

It is our hope that, by working with you, the Administration will see the benefit of having an open and transparent process that educates employees and communities. And at the very least, allows families to better prepare to make life-altering decisions.

Thank you for your time, and I will be happy to answer any questions.