PENNSYLVANIA'S PROBATION AND PAROLE SYSTEM NEEDS DESPERATE REFORM

In early April, I held a news conference outside city hall in Philadelphia to outline bipartisan legislation to reform Pennsylvania's parole and probation system. In addition to both Democratic and Republican legislators, we were joined by REFORM Alliance CEO and CNN host Van Jones, REFORM co-chair and award-winning recording artist Meek Mill, and REFORM co-chair and co-owner of the Philadelphia 76ers Michael Rubin.

To put it simply, the probation and parole system in our state is broken. Of all 50 states, Pennsylvania has the second-highest percentage of citizens on probation and parole and the highest incarceration rate in not only our region, but nearly the entire western world. Does this mean Pennsylvanians are more likely to break the law? Absolutely not. Our probation and parole system is built in a way to make it far too easy to violate parole for minor, technical infractions and have a sentence extended. This must stop.

This session, I've teamed up with my partner in reform, Rep. Sheryl Delozier, a Republican from Cumberland County, to work on probation and parole reform legislation. Rep. Delozier and I successfully worked together to pass clean slate legislation last session, and I'm excited to be able to similarly work together on parole and probation reform this year. As with clean slate, Meek Mill, Van Jones and Michael Rubin, in our corner supporting the need for reform.

Our bill looks to remove the pitfalls that plague the parole and probation system and cause people who make nonviolent mistakes to be pulled back into the criminal justice system. The changes include preventing the court from sentencing a person to consecutive sentences of probation, preventing the court from extending probation or parole due solely to nonpayment of fines and costs, and creating a system of incentives that rewards good behavior.

The bill would also remove testing positive for marijuana, as well as leaving the jurisdiction of the court without the intent to permanently avoid supervision as parole and probation violations. These commonsense changes are meant to bring Pennsylvania's parole and probation system into the modern age by acknowledging that currently the system is geared to return people to prison for minor violations, and that's unacceptable.

Pennsylvanians deserve the opportunity to right their life and pursue education, economic and housing opportunities, and this bipartisan legislation will help them succeed. I'll keep you updated on the progress of the bill as it moves through the General Assembly.

Did you know?

- As of 2016, Pennsylvania has 112,000 people on probation or parole. Illinois, a similar state in geography and population, has under 30,000.
- One out of every 23 Philadelphians is under some form of probation or parole supervision.
- As of May 2015, 54 percent of people in Philadelphia's jails are incarcerated due to an accusation, but not conviction, of a probation/parole violation.
BUDGET WRAPPED UP, BUT PRIORITIES REMAIN

I’m proud to help bring $2.5 million to Philadelphia to address gun violence this year, the Gun Violence Task Force Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives works to keep illegal guns off our streets. This year, the Gun Violence Task Force got a $2.5 million increase in funding to continue fighting illegal firearms.

Additionally, it allows automatic sealing of records for second- or third-degree misdemeanor offenses that included a less than 20-day prison sentence if the person has been free from conviction for 10 years for an offense that resulted in a year or more in prison and has paid all court-ordered fines. If you have questions about qualifying to have your record sealed, call the state help to combat this scourge. I’m proud to say that this funding will help to keep illegal firearms off our streets.

Finance the expansion of grant assistance to adults seeking education and $25 million to Pre-K, as well as an increase in funding to fight illegal firearms.

I’m proud to help bring $2.5 million to Philadelphia to address gun violence. Each year, my staff and I visit elementary schools in the district to make sure students have a card and rose to give their mother on Mother’s Day.

I look forward to continuing to fight for what Pennsylvanians deserve: Massachusetts, Pennsylvania’s veterans, victims of domestic abuse, homelessness and the justly incarcerated. If you have questions about qualifying to have your record sealed, call the Department of Corrections at 1-800-442-9337. A family of three with a parent working a full-time job at the federal minimum wage of $7.25 an hour has to work 55 hours a week to make ends meet. The minimum wage is not enough to get by, let alone to lift families out of poverty. Right now, we have a chance to raise the minimum wage to $12 an hour and give everyone who works a fair living wage.

The budget also allocated General Assistance, a funding program that serves some of our neediest citizens. I spoke publicly and personally against the removal of this program, as a help Pennsylvania’s veterans, victims of domestic abuse, homeless persons and elderly inmates make ends meet with $12 an hour. The federal minimum wage is not enough to stay healthy and fit. The current minimum wage is $7.25 an hour. This isn’t an easy job and the current minimum wage is $7.25 an hour. It is not enough to live on. A family of three with a parent working a full-time job at the federal minimum wage of $7.25 an hour has to work 55 hours a week to make ends meet. The minimum wage is not enough to get by, let alone to lift families out of poverty. Right now, we have a chance to raise the minimum wage to $12 an hour and give everyone who works a fair living wage.

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In March, I received news that a $1.49 million grant had been awarded to construct the Christian Gordon Trail segment of the Schuylkill River Trail. This grant is very exciting for the Schuylkill River Trail, a particular segment of the trail that will provide Pennsylvanians with a unique opportunity to connect to nature.

I love talking to students, and it was great to visit with students from the district’s Universal Charter School at the Capitol and introduce them to Gov. Tom Wolf.

In March, I was joined by Rep. Joanna McClinton to spend time working in the Capitol cafeterias to highlight the need for all Pennsylvanians to be paid a living wage.

Pennsylvania Promise provides education.

In March, I visited the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office and the Philadelphia Police Department for a town meeting on criminal justice reform. We outlined many of the current changes we’ve implemented and continue to push for safer communities and take advantage of housing, educational and economic opportunities.

The only job that we should have is the job to work vigorously against the removal of this program, as it helps our state and Philadelphia’s communities, victims of domestic abuse, homeless and disabled youth.

Workers deserve a living wage.

In March, I was joined by Mayor Jim Kenney to help improve our district.

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BUDGET WRAPPED UP, BUT PRIORITIES REMAIN

I’m proud to help bring $2.5 million to Philadelphia to address gun violence

As of June 30, Gov. Tom Wolf had signed all the necessary legislation for the city and state to move forward with removing illegal firearms.

Though the budget contained many good items, unfortunately working with both city and state officials to do everything members lose their lives to gun violence and I’ll continue refuse to sit by and watch as our neighbors, friends and family to remove illegal guns and prosecute those who traffic them. I

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We often have foreign dignitaries visit the Capitol, like these are important to ensuring that members of

Pennsylvania Promise provides ELEVATION OUT OF POVERTY

There’s no doubt in my mind that providing Pennsylvanians with an education is a surefire way to help lift families out of poverty and enact generational change. A college education has risen exponentially in price in the past 20 years, with average tuition costs doubling across the country. This is unacceptable and concerning that wages have not kept up anywhere close to the rising cost of tuition, which most families are unable to keep up with. I will continue supporting the Pennsylvania Promise.

This is a great news for families across the state, and in particular the segment of the trail that will likely put people to complete due to the terrain and industrial activity. However, once this portion of the trail is complete, connected Center City and Gray’s Ferry to provide an entirely off-road route for pedestrians and bicyclists. This project is adding about 2,065 feet of trail along the Schuylkill River Trail. This project is adding about 2,065 feet of trail along the Schuylkill River Trail.

In April, I invited the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office and the Philadelphia Police, Defender Services, and Philadelphia City Hall that meeting on criminal justice reform. We outlined many of the issues facing our criminal justice system, as well as the next steps to be taken to continue to help shape the future to maximize Pennsylvania’s recovery and take advantage of housing, educational and economic opportunities.

If you have questions about qualifying to have your record sealed, you can call the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, which may petition for their records to be sealed if they have been found guilty of a misdemeanor and any of the following: have a record for a year or more in prison and have paid all court-ordered financial obligations.

Additionally, it allows automatic sealing of records for second- or third-degree misdemeanor offenses that included a less-than-5-year prison sentence if the person has been free of convictions for 10 years, as well as sealing of criminal history records related to charges that resulted in non- convictions. Helping to provide these educational and housing opportunities helps to keep people out of the criminal justice system and pay Pennsylvania state taxes. Currently, the Department of Corrections receives around $2.1 billion per year in our state budget. Tax dollars that can be saved by not being spent on criminal justice reform can be spent on education, infrastructure, the environment and other areas that we know give a proven return on their investment.

In March, I was joined by Rep. Jamaal McClain to spend time working in the Capitol cafeterias to highlight the need for all Pennsylvanians to be paid a sustainable, living wage.

I haven’t worked a service job since I was younger, but I was instantly reminded of the difficult conditions

Our state currently ranks 47th in the nation in higher education funding per capita and dead last in U.S. News’ Best States 2018 report regarding higher education. State system students total $7.5 billion in funding to keep colleges and universities moving and continue fighting to remove illegal guns and prosecute those who trafficked them. I

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In early April, I held a news conference outside city hall in Philadelphia to outline bipartisan legislation to reform Pennsylvania's parole and probation system. In addition to both Democratic and Republican legislators, we were joined by REFORM Alliance CEO and CNN host Van Jones, REFORM co-chair and award-winning recording artist Meek Mill, and REFORM co-chair and co-owner of the Philadelphia 76ers Michael Rubin.

To put it simply, the probation and parole system in our state is broken. Of all 50 states, Pennsylvania has the second-highest percentage of citizens on probation and parole and the highest incarceration rate in not only our region, but nearly the entire western world. Does this mean Pennsylvanians are more likely to break the law? Absolutely not. Our probation and parole system is built in a way to make it far too easy to violate parole for minor, technical infractions and have a sentence extended. This must stop.

This session, I've teamed up with my partner in reform, Rep. Sheryl Delozier, a Republican from Cumberland County, to work on parole and probation reform legislation. Rep. Delozier and I successfully worked together to pass clean slate legislation last session, and I'm excited to work with her again to ensure that Pennsylvanians with a criminal record have access to educational, career and housing opportunities. We've been fighting for criminal justice reform as Meek Mill, Van Jones and Michael Rubin, in our corner supporting the need for reform.

Our bill looks to remove the pitfalls that plague the parole and probation system and cause people who make nonviolent mistakes to be pulled back into the criminal justice system. The changes include preventing the court from sentencing a person to consecutive sentences of probation, preventing the court from extending probation or parole due solely to nonpayment of fines and costs, and creating a system of incentives that rewards good behavior.

The bill would also remove testing positive for marijuana, as well as leaving the jurisdiction of the court without the intent to permanently avoid supervision as parole and probation violations. These common-sense changes are necessary to bring Pennsylvania's parole and probation system into the modern age by acknowledging that currently the system is geared to return people to prison for minor violations, and that's unacceptable.

Pennsylvanians deserve the opportunity to right their life and pursue education, economic and housing opportunities, and this bipartisan legislation will help them succeed. I'll keep you updated on the progress of the bill as it moves through the General Assembly.

Did you know?

• As of 2016, Pennsylvania has 112,000 people on probation or parole, Illinois, a similar state in geography and population, has under 30,000.
• One out of every 22 Philadelphians is under some form of probation or parole supervision.
• As of May 2015, 54 percent of people in Philadelphia's jails are incarcerated due to an accusation, but not conviction, of a probation/parole violation.

PENNSYLVANIA'S PROBATION AND PAROLE SYSTEM NEEDS DESPERATE REFORM

This summer's can't-miss event will be in our district on August 10, 2019 in the 1900 block of Washington Avenue. Don't miss out on helpful information, food, games, and of course, entertainment, including: Doug E Fresh • Slick Rick • Brand Nubian • DAS EFX • Tony Terry • Jean Carne • And more!

DON'T MISS THE 2019 SOUL SCHOOL SUMMER STREET FESTIVAL

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Inside:

• OVER $1 MILLION GRANT FOR SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL

• PENNSYLVANIA DESERVE A RAISE IN THE MINIMUM WAGE

• PENNSYLVANIA'S PROBATION AND PAROLE SYSTEM NEEDS DESPERATE REFORM
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