

Testimony of Catherine McVey, Chairman
Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole
For the Senate Judiciary Committee
September 12, 2008

Chairmen Greenleaf and Costa and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to explain the Board's role in helping county probation and parole departments to improve their services as required by the Parole Act.

Within the Board, the Bureau of Probation Services provides funds to county probation departments through a grant-in-aid program, establishes standards for the departments and provides technical assistance and basic and in-service training to county probation staff members in 65 county adult probation departments. For the remaining two counties, Mercer and Venango, the Board provides probation and parole services.

The Bureau developed statewide uniform standards for county adult probation and parole departments based on the American Correctional Association's standards. This includes 227 different standards for which the Bureau conducts annual audits over a three year audit cycle. In addition, the Bureau provides technical assistance with standards compliance, evaluation of programs, and introduces supervision strategies designed to reduce recidivism. The Bureau keeps counties informed of various trainings to enhance their knowledge and services by providing a catalogue of trainings. All Board sponsored in-service training and three-week Basic Training Academy participation is provided at no cost to the county. Further, the Bureau publishes the County Adult Probation and Parole Annual Statistical Report.

The Parole Act authorized the Board to adopt regulations establishing criteria for acceptance of cases for supervision and presentence investigations from the courts. Annually, the Board receives approximately 6,000 requests for Special Probation/Parole supervision and 750 requests for Pre-Sentence Investigations from the Courts of Common Pleas. Currently, the Board is supervising 5,700 Special Probation/Parole offenders.

Since 1966, the Board has administered a grant-in-aid program to expand and improve county adult probation personnel and services. As amended in 1986, the program is to fund additional costs incurred for those eligible county probation staff and programs that meet the qualifications and standards established by the Board. Per Act 1986-134, "for the fiscal year 1987-1988 and thereafter, the grant-in-aid shall provide eighty percent (80%) of the personnel salary costs incurred by a county to administer these additional programs and services. If insufficient funds are appropriated, each county shall receive a prorated reduction in the grant-in-aid."

The requirement for prorating the funds if a sufficient amount is not appropriated recognizes that funds may not always be available to reach the 80% requirement; thus, the pro-rating of funds means that all counties get equal percentages of the state grant-in-aid appropriation. In 1991, Act 35 imposed supervision fees on adult offenders under supervision of county adult probation agencies and the Board. Furthermore, the Crime Victims Act, states in part, "The money in this fund shall be used to pay the salaries and employee benefits of all probation and parole personnel employed by the county probation and parole department and the operational expenses of that department. Money from this fund shall be used to supplement Federal, State, or county appropriations for the county adult probation department." Of the total supervision fees collected, 50% are retained by the county to pay the salaries and employee benefits of all

probation and parole personnel and operational expenses. The remaining 50% of the supervision fee is deposited into a restricted receipt account within the General Fund. It has been the policy of the Board to return these fees to the counties on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

The state grant-in-aid appropriation provides approximately 40% of the 80% requirement for personnel costs for 1,014 eligible positions. The remaining 40% of funds received by the counties is allocated from the Offender Supervision Fee revenues that are deposited into the restricted receipt account. The total amount of funds received by the county is affected by the county itself since the allocation takes into consideration the county supervision fee collections. Some county probation departments are more proactive in collecting supervision fees than others and therefore end up with a higher percentage of their personnel costs covered through the redistributed supervision fees.

For FY 07/08 the counties received \$35,017,484 in funds from the Board. The Grant-in-Aid program provided \$19,107,000 and the Supervision Fee augmentation provided \$15,910,484, a funding percentage of 76.8%.

The Offender Supervision Fee augmentation to the grant-in-aid program brings the total amount of funding to approximately 80% for the 1,014 eligible funded positions. The Offender Supervision Fee augmentation to the grant-in-aid appropriation has consistently raised the funding percentage resulting in approximately a 30% increase over the past two years.

The Board is committed to working with local probation and parole departments in order to be responsive to their needs. Through the programs and services we provide to them, the Board is

endeavoring to ensure adequate funding and training of county adult probation and parole personnel as provided for in the Parole Act; and, to implementing uniform standards to ensure professional probation services statewide for all offenders not sentenced to institutional confinement. Further, the Advisory Committee on Probation provides knowledge, insight and guidance to the Board to continue to improve county adult probation services.

Chairmen Greenleaf and Costa and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to the committee. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding the services we provide to the counties as we all continue to enhance the safety of the public.