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JUN 29 2006

**PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY**

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Chairman

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June 29, 2006

Honorable Thomas A. Tangretti  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Room 328 Irvis Office Building  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Representative Tangretti:

I am writing regarding House Bill No. 2835 Printer's No. 4354, which creates the authority for counties to impose a central or regional booking fee. The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) has been at the forefront of the development of booking centers at the state and local level for 10 years. Therefore, we support the concept of a fee to fund the important public safety work of booking centers; however, we would like to share with you information on our efforts regarding booking centers and some concerns with this legislation.

Proper identification of a suspect or an offender that leads to timely and accurate information being provided to the criminal history record repository is critical to the safety of law enforcement personnel as well as the general public. In our efforts to facilitate the rapid and uniform collection and dissemination of all criminal data, PCCD has funded the establishment of over 75 booking centers throughout the Commonwealth. PCCD's oversight of these efforts has ensured that all of these systems comply with state and federal standards. Compliance with these standards ties the local or state agency to state and federal identification systems to enable the immediate identification of individuals. Through the implementation of this equipment the electronic criminal data submitted to the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), and subsequently to the FBI, has increased from 45% to 75%.

Further, the PCCD currently provides a grant to the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association (PCPA) to support the implementation of regional or central booking centers. The PCPA, based on PCCD guidelines, requires that a booking center provide complete offender identification and processing for an entire region or county. The PCPA is able to offer a substantial volume discount on the purchase of equipment due to their large purchasing contract that individual agencies would not be able to negotiate.

In addition, PCCD has been chairing an offender identification committee to develop a tactical plan that will improve the quality and quantity of fingerprints. A plan is needed to address known deficiencies in the current systems, including a lack of timely fingerprint submissions, confusion regarding court rules and statutes, and a lack of training and resources. The offender identification committee consists of representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, county jails, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, county probation departments, the PSP, local police, the Administration Office of Pennsylvania Courts, district justices, district attorneys, Office of General Counsel, Office of Attorney General, Sheriffs Association, PCPA, and others. The committee will be examining the issues concerning timely and accurate fingerprinting and will develop recommendations to address the deficiencies.

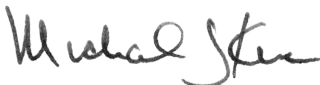
As we reviewed H.B. 2835, we had concerns that the bill does not provide a definition of a central or regional booking center or language regarding how the funds would be disbursed. Further, the bill does not establish a framework to promote information sharing both within and between counties as well as the state and the federal governments. Without this, it is possible for a police department and a district attorney's office to each have their own equipment that is not integrated with other systems.

To achieve these goals, the legislation should mandate that booking centers comply with federal and state standards as well as mandate coordination and collaboration by the various justice agencies within the counties. The requirement of a countywide plan and centralized oversight by PCCD will ensure this occurs. PCCD can establish guidelines for technical uniformity and sharing of limited resources, while allowing flexibility for each county to meet its particular geographic or demographic needs.

PCCD welcomes the opportunity to work with the legislature on this issue. We are in the process of drafting proposed amendatory language to the bill to address the objectives we have outlined. However, we strongly recommend that the legislature wait until the offender identification workgroup completes the development of a tactical plan that will inform policy and decision makers regarding offender identification processes and technology and how best to fund such technology.

If you would like to discuss this matter with me, please contact me at 705-0888, extension 3011.

Very truly yours,



Michael J. Kane, Esq.  
Executive Director

cc: Honorable Dwight Evans  
Honorable Brett Feese

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MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All House Members  
**FROM:** Representative Thomas Tangretti  
**DATE:** May 31, 2006  
**SUBJECT:** Co-sponsorship of legislation

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In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation that imposes a booking fee on criminal convictions to fund the start-up, operation, or maintenance of central or regional booking centers.

Booking centers are an important tool in fighting crime. The fee created from this legislation will provide for additional centers to aide our local law enforcement agencies. Each center would have scanning devices to take digital images of suspects' palms and fingerprints and log them into a national database. The system makes it easier for police to identify arrested individuals and determine if they have prior arrests or are wanted by police in other jurisdictions.

I believe this legislation would go a long way to strengthen our law enforcement agencies and lessen the burden on the taxpayers of the Commonwealth. Please join me in arming the police force with the necessary tools to keep our communities safe.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact my office at 783-5963 or via email at [cclory@pahouse.net](mailto:cclory@pahouse.net).