

# PENNSYLVANIA JUVENILE TASK FORCE

## February 5, 2020 Meeting Executive Summary

On February 5, 2020, the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice Task Force convened its inaugural meeting. The meeting was led by Task Force co-chairs Senator Lisa Baker, Senator Jay Costa, Representative Tarah Toohil, and Representative Mike Zabel. The co-chairs reviewed the charge and goals of the Task Force, as established by state leadership, and discussed the process and timeline. The Task Force then examined the evolution of juvenile justice in Pennsylvania, as well as national juvenile justice trends and research. The meeting concluded with a discussion about strengths and areas in need of further examination within Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system.

### Task Force Charge, Goals and Process

#### *Opening Remarks and Introduction*

Sen. Lisa Baker called the meeting to order and welcomed the members, asking each to introduce themselves. The members of the Task Force are:

- James Anderson, Former Executive Director (retired), Juvenile Court Judges' Commission
- Sen. Lisa Baker, Senate District 20
- Andrew Barnes, Executive Deputy Secretary of Policy and Planning, Office of Governor Tom Wolf
- Rep. Karen Boback, House District 117
- Kevin Bethel, Special Advisor and Chief of School Safety, School District of Philadelphia
- Meghan Black, Assistant District Attorney, Allegheny County
- Quimon Broady, Youth Member
- Russell Carlino, Chief Probation Officer, Juvenile Probation Department, Allegheny County
- Judge Kim Berkeley Clark, 5th Judicial District
- Sen. Jay Costa, Senate District 43
- Dominick DiSalvo, Corporate Director of Clinical Services, KidsPeace
- Cynthia Figueroa, Deputy Mayor, Office of Children and Families, City of Philadelphia
- Steven Guccini, Commissioner, Pike County
- Helen Gym, Councilwoman At-Large, Philadelphia City Council
- Rep. Kristine Howard, House District 167
- Dan Jurman, Executive Director, Office of Advocacy and Reform
- Sen. Scott Martin, Senate District 13
- Haundray Muir, Youth Member
- Michael Pennington, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency

- Tara Piechowicz, Deputy Secretary of Policy and Planning, Office of Governor Tom Wolf
- Judge Douglas Reichley, Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas
- Jonathan Rubin, Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth, and Families
- Tiffany Sizemore, Assistant Professor of Clinical Legal Education, Duquesne University School of Law
- Richard Steele, Executive Director, Juvenile Court Judges' Commission
- Matthew Stem, Deputy Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Scott Talley, Director, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Bureau of Children's Behavioral Health Services
- Rep. Tarah Toohil, House District 116
- Sen. Anthony H. Williams, Senate District 8
- Joseph Werner, School Social Worker, Pennridge School District
- Rep. Mike Zabel, House District 163

#### *Review of Task Force Charge and Goals*

Sen. Jay Costa reviewed the charge to the Task Force established by state leaders from the three branches of government, including Governor Tom Wolf, Chief Justice Thomas Saylor, Senate President Joseph Scarnati, House Speaker Mike Turzai, House Majority Leader Bryan Cutler, House Minority Leader Frank Dermody, and Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman.

The charge to the Task Force from state leadership is "to develop data-driven policy recommendations through stakeholder consensus with the goals of protecting public safety, ensuring accountability, containing costs, and improving outcomes for youth, families, and communities." These recommendations will be used as the foundation for statutory, budgetary, and administrative changes during the 2021-2022 legislative session.

Judge Clark then spoke about the judiciary's leadership role in bringing together the Task Force, including a unanimous vote by the members of the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission to move forward with the process. Judge Clark highlighted the importance of collaboration between the branches.

### *Review of Task Force Process and Timeline*

Rep. Tarah Toohil reviewed the process and timeline, beginning with a state data analysis and system assessment review from February through June. In July, the Task Force will assess juvenile justice research and break into subgroups in order to begin policy development. The Task Force will deliver a final report to the legislature, the Governor, and the Chief Justice containing a comprehensive, statewide set of policy reform recommendations by the end of November. Rep. Mike Zabel stressed the importance of collecting input from stakeholders throughout the process and asked members to begin scheduling roundtable meetings with a wide range of stakeholders. Executive summaries of each set of roundtable meetings will be made available.

### **Overview of Juvenile Justice Landscape**

Rep. Zabel introduced members of the team from The Pew Charitable Trusts' public safety performance project and the Crime and Justice Institute, who will be providing technical assistance to the Task Force.

The Pew team presented federal data showing the significant decline of the national juvenile commitment rate between 1997 and 2017, mirroring a similar decline in juvenile crime. However, the team noted, there is wide variation in these trends among states. James Anderson and Richard Steele (former and current executive directors, respectively, of the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission) then discussed the evolution of juvenile justice in Pennsylvania, describing the implementation of balanced and restorative justice principles, the Models for Change initiative, the recommendations of the Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice, and the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy.

### *State Systems Out of Step with Research*

The Pew team presented data from seven states—Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, South Dakota, West Virginia, Kansas and Utah—that have enacted juvenile justice reform through task force processes similar to the one Pennsylvania is now embarking upon. These states were experiencing poor or unknown outcomes for youth in out-of-home placements despite investing as much as \$199,000 per youth per year. While those states lacked a broad continuum of high-quality in-home services prior to reform, many have since achieved statewide access to such services through reinvestment resulting from legislation.

The Task Force learned that in response to these poor returns, states turned to a strong and growing body of

research about what works to reduce reoffending and improve outcomes. Research summarized by the National Academy of Sciences shows that out-of-home placements generally fail to produce better outcomes than alternative nonresidential interventions. The National Academy of Sciences also found that longer stays out-of-home do not yield consistent reductions in youth reoffending.

### *State-Specific Policy Solutions*

The Task Force also learned that each of the seven states developed tailored, research-based policy solutions guided by protecting public safety by strengthening the continuum of services and sanctions in the community; containing costs by limiting out-of-home populations; and sustaining reforms by reinvesting savings in evidence-based programs and providing continued oversight. Packages enacted in the seven states across the political spectrum included large projected reductions in out-of-home populations that would result in savings available for reinvestment in community-based services. Most of the states included upfront reinvestment dollars to jumpstart reform.

### *Improved Outcomes*

Task Force members learned that as states implemented reforms, they prioritized the expansion of community-based and evidence-based services for youth on probation and within other systems like education and child welfare.

### **Task Force Discussion**

The Task Force discussed what members perceived as strengths of the Pennsylvania juvenile justice system, areas in need of improvement, and issues about which they had questions and would like further examination. Generally, the Task Force praised the Commonwealth's history of collaboration and communication between branches, its willingness to take a critical look at the juvenile justice system and the hard work of those who work on the frontlines of the juvenile justice system. The Task Force noted the need for data analysis to understand the drivers of the juvenile justice system.

### **Next Steps**

The next Task Force meeting will take place virtually on June 10 from 3-4 p.m. through a web-based platform link to be made available on the Task Force' website: <http://www.pacourts.us/pa-juvenile-justice-task-force>. The Task Force website includes meeting dates and locations; presentation slides; meeting summaries; and other relevant materials.