

PENNSYLVANIA JUVENILE TASK FORCE

June 10, 2020 Meeting Executive Summary

On June 10, 2020, the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice Task Force convened its second meeting, led by Task Force co-chairs Senator Lisa Baker, Senator Jay Costa and Representative Mike Zabel. The co-chairs reviewed the charge and goals of the Task Force and described the updated process and timeline that state leaders from each branch of government jointly adapted as a result of COVID-19. The Task Force then discussed its forthcoming review of Pennsylvania's juvenile justice data. The meeting concluded with a discussion of logistical next steps.

Task Force Charge, Goals and Updated Process

Opening Remarks and Introduction

Sen. Baker welcomed the Task Force back after the co-chairs delayed activities since March due to COVID-19. Sen. Baker acknowledged the challenges and tumult that Pennsylvanians experienced over the previous several months due to COVID-19 and, more recently, as important conversations about racial justice have unfolded in Pennsylvania and across the country.

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.

Sen. Costa stated that the recent events of the last several weeks around issues of race and the justice system only heighten the importance of the mandate to the Task Force.

Updated Task Force Process and Timeline

Rep. Zabel reviewed the process and timeline the Task Force was originally charged with executing. That process and timeline included: reviewing data of Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system over the spring and early summer; developing policy recommendations in the late-summer and fall; and issuing a final report to state leaders by the end of November. Due to COVID-19, state leaders revised the original process and extended the timeline. All the activities will be the same, but the timing and format will change. Task Force meetings will occur virtually (unless or until

circumstances change and the Task Force feels they can safely meet in person) every other week for approximately two hours. Beginning at its next meeting July 15, the Task Force will review and discuss juvenile justice system data. In the fall, members will review juvenile justice research about what policies and practices are most effective at improving outcomes. The Task Force will then break into subgroups to develop and discuss policy solutions. Subgroup discussions will continue through the end of the year and, in January, the Task Force will reconvene to come to a consensus on a set of recommendations to be included in a final report to Governor Wolf, Chief Justice Saylor, and legislative leadership by March 31, 2021.

Throughout this process, the Task Force will also gather input from stakeholders throughout the Task Force process via roundtables and public testimony, among other means. Sen. Baker stated that numerous Task Force members continue to work to modify their plans for stakeholder roundtables given that many of these meetings will now need to be conducted virtually. Sen. Baker said that the Task Force co-chairs will alert members when these roundtables have been scheduled.

Overview of Data Analysis

When COVID-19 struck Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC) and the Pennsylvania Administrative Office of the Courts had already provided data to the Task Force. Thanks to the efforts of staff within both agencies, preparations for Task Force data analysis continued. In addition, JCJC distributed two questionnaires on behalf of the Task Force to gather input from juvenile probation officers and juvenile court judges across Pennsylvania. The team from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Crime and Justice Institute providing technical assistance to the Task Force is in the process of finalizing data sharing agreements with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to gather data about the intersection between the education and juvenile justice systems and with the Department of Human Services to receive data about where Pennsylvania's fiscal resources are allocated across the system.

Starting at the Task Force's next meeting on July 15th, the Task Force will review an analysis of the state's

qualitative and quantitative data to examine Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system at each stage. Questions this data analysis will aim to address include, but are not limited to:

- Which youth are moving through each stage of the system, and for which offenses?
- How long are youth staying in each stage of the system?
- What criteria, if any, guide decision-makers at each of these stages across the system – whether that's statute, court rules, statewide policy, or local policy?
- Where are state fiscal resources allocated across each stage of the system?

Questions and requests for follow-up analysis from the Task Force will be tracked and addressed in subsequent meetings, to the extent the data allow.

Task Force Discussion

The Task Force discussed any questions they had about the data analysis and gathering input from stakeholders. Task Force members expressed a particular interest in looking at racial disparities within the juvenile justice system as a part of the data analysis.

Next Steps

The next Task Force meeting will take place virtually on July 15th from 3 - 5 p.m. through a web-based platform link to be made available on the [Task Force website](#).