



November 21, 2019

Jake Horowitz, Director  
Public Safety Performance Project  
The Pew Charitable Trusts  
901 E Street NW, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20004-1409

Dear Mr. Horowitz,

We, the undersigned leaders of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, write to request the technical assistance of The Pew Charitable Trusts' public safety performance project (Pew) as Pennsylvania undertakes a comprehensive assessment of our juvenile justice system. Our charge to this interbranch initiative 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.

We are proud of Pennsylvania's commitment to achieving better juvenile justice outcomes. For example, the Juvenile Court Judges Commission and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency facilitate strong collaboration across the three branches of government, and between state and local leaders, leading to robust policies and practices across the Commonwealth. In 2009, Pennsylvania leaders again joined together to establish the Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice to restore public confidence in the system. Moreover, in recent years, stakeholders have implemented the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy to expand evidence-based practices. Yet challenges remain. Pennsylvania has one of the highest rates of commitment in the nation, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. In addition, while states as varied as Kentucky, Ohio, and Texas have enacted juvenile justice legislation that averted future costs to taxpayers and led to reinvestment of existing system resources into effective practices, Pennsylvania has not comprehensively evaluated its juvenile justice systems—and the funding and policies that support them—in years.

To build upon our past successes and address future challenges, we now seek Pew's technical assistance to support a Juvenile Justice Task Force committed to using data and research to enhance the public safety return on taxpayers' investment in the juvenile justice system.

In support of this effort, we as state leaders are committing to:

- Form a balanced, bipartisan, and inter-branch Task Force charged with producing recommendations to protect public safety, ensure accountability, contain taxpayer costs, and improve outcomes.

- Appoint members to the Task Force within 30 days of the signing of this letter.
- Publicly announce the formation of the Task Force, as well as the undersigned leaders' commitment to the process, with a jointly signed press release and/or press conference.
- Ensure the Task Force:
  - holds a minimum of six meetings, beginning no later than January 30, 2020 and additional meetings as necessary;
  - convenes roundtable discussions with juvenile justice system stakeholders and solicits additional input from stakeholders as necessary; and
  - publishes its findings and recommendations in a report to the Governor, the Chief Justice, and the General Assembly no later than November 30, 2020.
- Provide Pew and its partner The Crime and Justice Institute at Community Resources for Justice (CJI) with full and timely access within existing infrastructure to the data required to complete a thorough analysis of the drivers of the juvenile justice system.
- Make ourselves or designee available for briefings from members of the Pew team and the Task Force when: data analysis and system assessment are complete; policies are being developed; the Task Force prepares to release its consensus recommendations; and as necessary throughout the process.
- Review the information and analyses produced by the Task Force.
- Use the recommendations of the Task Force as the foundation for statutory, budgetary, and administrative changes to be considered during the 2021-2022 regular session of the General Assembly.
- Ensure that the recommendations of the Task Force are designed to achieve savings for taxpayers and to establish sustained reinvestment into programs and practices that work to improve outcomes.

We request that Pew and CJI:

- Work with the chair(s) of the Task Force and its members to facilitate meetings and stakeholder engagement.
- Provide the Task Force with research and analysis of Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system and relevant statutes and administrative policies, including an analysis of the factors driving commitment to Pennsylvania's juvenile residential facilities, a review of the relevant agency policies, and an assessment of the use of evidence-based programs and practices in the Commonwealth.
- Support the planning and facilitation of roundtable discussions with stakeholders and provide summaries to the Task Force.
- Facilitate the development and drafting of policy options designed to achieve taxpayer savings for system reinvestment based on data and research, with the goals of protecting public safety, ensuring accountability, containing costs, and improving outcomes for youth, families, and communities by:
  - advising and educating the Task Force about evidence-based policies, programs, and practices that have been shown to be effective in reducing juvenile offending and recidivism;
  - projecting the juvenile residential population and cost impact to the Commonwealth of specific policy options; and
  - engaging and consulting with Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system stakeholders prior to and after the release of the report.

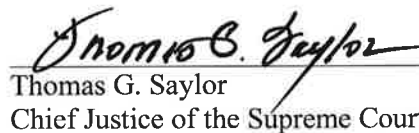
- Advise executive, agency, and legislative officials and the judiciary by drafting and commenting on legislation for and during the 2021-2022 legislative session, as well as other changes to policy, procedure, and budgets.
- Assist the Office of the Governor, the General Assembly, the judicial branch, and the Task Force in educating the public and policy makers on the recommendations and legislation, including:
  - continuing to provide feedback and cost projections on legislation and proposed legislative amendments, as requested;
  - engaging and consulting with justice-system stakeholders;
  - developing and implementing a communications plan to make certain the public, the press, key justice system stakeholders, and members of the General Assembly are aware of the Task Force's goals, findings and recommendations.

We, the undersigned, are fully committed to increasing public safety, ensuring accountability, controlling costs, and improving outcomes for youth, families, and communities in Pennsylvania. We request Pew's assistance in achieving this goal. We look forward to working with you and appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Tom Wolf  
Governor



Thomas G. Saylor  
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court



Mike Turzai  
Speaker of the House



Joe Scarnati  
Senate President Pro Tempore



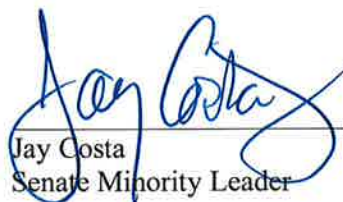
Bryan Cutler  
House Majority Leader



Jake Corman  
Senate Majority Leader



Frank Dermody  
House Minority Leader



Jay Costa  
Senate Minority Leader