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Harrisburg

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January 9, 2017

Secretary Wetzel
Dept. of Corrections
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Dear Secretary Wetzel:

I am writing to you today because I have very real concerns about the potential closing of the SCI in Frackville. The SCI in Frackville is vital to the economy of the region. Unlike many areas who have other industries that provide jobs to our constituents, this SCI is THE employer for the entire region. I have constituents who travel to this location for their job every day.

I would prefer to not see any SCI's closed. I understand that the inmate population is down, but we don't know what will happen in the future. I would prefer that we look for cost savings somewhere else in the budget.

I am asking you to take these concerns into consideration in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kurt A. Masser".

Kurt A. Masser
Majority Caucus Administrator
107th District

cc: Governor Wolf
Representative Tobash
Representative Goodman
Senator Argall

KAM/ola

4RD DISTRICT
WAYNE D. FONTANA

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Democratic Caucus Chairman



Senate of Pennsylvania

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DEMOCRATIC CHAIR
COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY
COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC
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LAW & JUSTICE
PULKS & EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS
POLICY

January 9, 2017

The Honorable John Wetzel
Secretary, Department of Corrections
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Dear Secretary Wetzel:

I am writing with regard to the recent announcement by the Department of Corrections relative to the upcoming planned closure of two state correctional facilities. More specifically, I want to share my deep concern that SCI Pittsburgh is included on the list of potential facility closures.

While I am sure you have already heard or will hear from stakeholders with an interest in one or more of the five prisons on the list, I want to reiterate what the department itself has said about SCI Pittsburgh and how this particular facility would "present a significant challenge for closure." SCI Pittsburgh is distinctive from other institutions in that it serves as a diagnostic and classification center that facilitates the reception of incoming inmates from the western part of the state and provides medical specialty services.

While I understand the cost of operating these facilities and providing the programs and services within, the cost of such a potential closure reaches far beyond simply closing the door and turning off the lights. At the end of the day, this is more than just a decision to close a facility – and SCI Pittsburgh is more than just a building. This decision impacts our prison workers, economy and cuts off the rehabilitative efforts underway in that facility. For over 500 people in the Pittsburgh region, SCI Pittsburgh provides the jobs that sustain them and provides a means to self-sufficiency at a time when our unemployment rate remains one of the highest in the nation. We must also keep in mind that this facility includes a specialized unit for veterans on whom we cannot turn our backs.

For many years the public discussion in the corrections community has been centered around treatment and rehabilitation where possible. SCI Pittsburgh provides not only housing to inmates but specialized services to inmates who are struggling with substance abuse and addiction issues. At a time when the worsening opioid epidemic is destroying families and crippling communities across the state, it is alarming that we would potentially close the doors to one of the few facilities that provides the treatment and rehabilitative services for those suffering from addiction.

It's no secret that between lagging revenue numbers and a growing deficit, Pennsylvania is on shaky financial ground. I certainly understand and support the need to discuss efficiencies and cost saving ideas such as consolidating and streamlining programs and services where it makes sound fiscal, logistical and practical

Secretary Wetzel
Page Two

sense, especially in the area of corrections. However, given the infrastructure investment of over \$30 million the state put into this facility just 10 years ago coupled with the cost savings met by the department due to this institution's proximity to the many specialty hospitals in our region makes SCI Pittsburgh unique.

While consolidating some of these prison facilities might make good fiscal sense on paper, we need to ensure that we're making the best decisions based on the human impact, which is far more valuable than what lies on any budget spreadsheet.

I would also like to express my displeasure with the time frame of the closure plan. Decisions of this magnitude cannot and should not be made in haste. Making a decision to close a prison facility within the next two weeks fits that definition. A decision like this warrants a public discussion within our community among workers, families and Corrections officials. The department's statement announcing the closure plan indicated that you are committed to providing complete, timely information to all those involved including employees, inmates, legislators and the affected communities should be met. Again, I do not believe a two-week time frame does that.

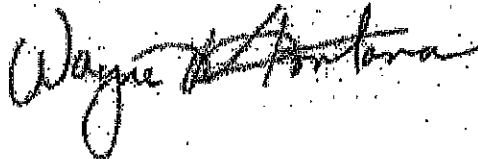
That said, I would like to request that the department postpone any decision making until you schedule a public hearing in Pittsburgh on the matter. If you are true to your word about making this as thorough and deliberative a decision as possible, I believe this is a fair and reasonable request. In the meantime, I also plan to ask for a Senate Democratic Policy Committee to convene a hearing and involve the department in those discussions as well.

Additionally, I am in the process of drafting legislation that would prohibit the Department of Corrections from closing a state correctional institution without conducting a public hearing within the municipality in which the facility is located. Under my legislation, the department would be required to provide at least 30 days' notice of the public hearing. Once again, I truly believe this is a fair and rational expectation that if enacted, would better prepare all of us for situations like this in the future.

I realize difficult decisions lie ahead for all us as we approach consideration of a responsible fiscal plan for the Commonwealth and strongly urge you to consider the unique characteristics that SCI Pittsburgh provides within the state corrections system and the impact of which losing the facility would have not only in the Pittsburgh region, but the challenges it would present to other facilities throughout the Commonwealth that are not equipped or prepared to replace, particularly for oncology patients.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Wayne D. Fontana

State Senator, 42nd Senatorial District

cc: The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania

MIKE TOBASH
MEMBER
125TH Legislative District

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VETERANS AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

RepTobash.com
mtobash@phillorsegop.com

January 11, 2017

Governor Wolf
Room 225 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

I am writing to you today because I have very real concerns about the potential closing of the SCI in Frackville. The SCI in Frackville is vital to the economy of the region. Frackville SCI is an important and efficient facility. The staff is well trained and hardworking, among the best and most dedicated employees in the state system. I have constituents who travel to this location for their job every day.

I would prefer not to see any SCI's closed. I understand that the inmate population is down, but we don't know what will happen in the future. I would prefer that we look for cost savings somewhere else in the budget.

I am asking you to take these concerns into consideration in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike G. Tobash".

Mike G. Tobash
Representative 125th District

cc: Secretary Wetzel
Representative Masser
Representative Goodman
Senator Argall

MGT/tlb

*CC Woodside
1/18/17*

43RD DISTRICT
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The Democratic Leader



Senate of Pennsylvania

COMMITTEES

RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS,
MINORITY CHAIRMAN

costa@senate.pa.gov
www.senate.pa.gov

January 12, 2017

The Honorable Tom Wolf
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor,

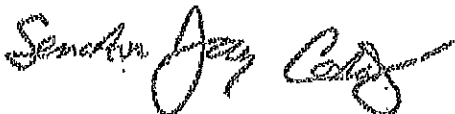
Your recent announcement that you are analyzing the potential closure of two prisons has been met with mixed reviews. Several of our Senate Democratic caucus members have expressed concerns about the impact the closures will have statewide on the jobs of corrections officers and facility employees, the communities they live in, and the Commonwealth's economy.

In the current budget climate there are certainly relevant reasons for discussing the reform, consolidation, or downsizing of departments and the services they provide. We are well aware of the looming, nearly \$2 billion budget deficit in the coming fiscal year and together we have to make tough choices. However, if those choices can be made easier because some departments are experiencing reduced caseloads, including the number of prisoners we are housing, we should certainly grab those opportunities.

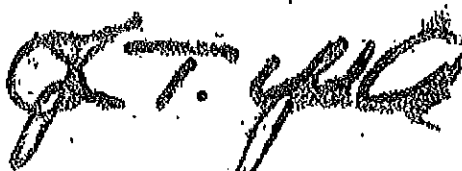
That being said, there are compelling reasons beyond the reduction of state expenditures for keeping prisons open. As mentioned above, jobs and local economies must be taken into consideration. In addition, the services that the individual facilities provide, geographic concerns for families, access to services that help run a safe and efficient prison, amongst many others need to be taken into consideration before final decisions should be made. Taking a step back, providing an opportunity to hear from the public, and making a transparent decision, assuming one must be made at all, is the best way to move forward.

To that end, I am respectfully asking that you direct Secretary of Corrections Wetzel to postpone the decision on which facilities will be closed until such time as public hearings can be held which will allow for the proper vetting of the serious concerns raised by parties impacted by the final decision.

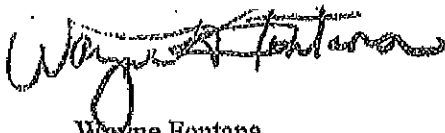
Sincerely,



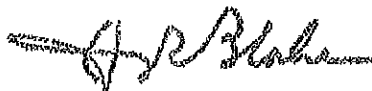
Jay Costa
Democratic Leader
Pennsylvania State Senate



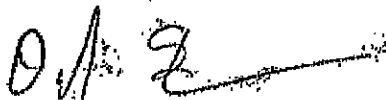
John Yudishak
Senator, 14th District



Wayne Fontana
Senator, 42nd District
Caucus Chairman



John Blake
Senator, 22nd District
Caucus Administrator



Daylin Leach
Senator, 17th District

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January 12, 2017

Honorable Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Secretary John Wetzel
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Dear Governor Wolf and Secretary Wetzel:

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, which we hope will have some bearing on your very difficult decision regarding potential state correctional institute closings in Pennsylvania.

We are primarily interested in the future of SCI Waymart ("Waymart"), which is one of three prisons or correctional facilities located in Wayne County. The County operates its' own roughly 200 bed correctional facility in central Wayne County and the federal government operates USP Canaan on property immediately adjacent to SCI Waymart.

In the past, the three facilities have worked well together for training and emergency back-up purposes and SCI Waymart is the designated emergency facility for housing Wayne County inmates should the need arise. Waymart, by virtue of its forensic unit, is in a unique position to provide mental health services not only within the state system but also to county correctional facilities like our own, as Wayne, Susquehanna and Lackawanna counties routinely send inmates to Waymart for treatment.

By virtue of its' century long history in dealing with inmates who have serious mental health issues, the facility has developed a culture, both inside and outside of its' walls, of treatment of individuals and acceptance, within the surrounding community, of this critical mission. It would be difficult to duplicate this institutional expertise and community support anywhere else.

The number of specialized beds available at Waymart (436) far exceeds the number available elsewhere, within the system. Logically, it would be safer and more efficacious to leave these challenging inmates in place rather than to attempt their relocation to another facility which transfer could prove hazardous and would require the creation of a system and community which already exists in Waymart. The Waymart staff has already received specialized training to handle the intensity of the needs of the mental health population.

In fact, we believe that it would be prudent for the Commonwealth to build upon the investments made in Waymart over the years by not only continuing but expanding its operation. Waymart is located on a

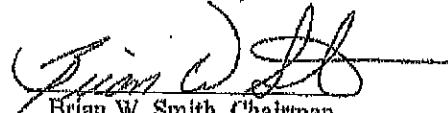
*a: Woodside
1/18*

parcel of more than 420 acres, with obvious potential for further development. As noted, the staff is already experienced in handling a challenging inmate population and has community support fostered by the hundreds of thousands of dollars which annually accrue to the region through payments to local utilities and service providers, such as Wayne Memorial Hospital, local food producers, repair and supply oriented businesses, as well as paychecks to the many local residents employed there.

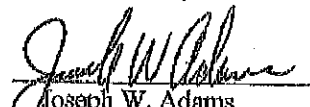
Waymart's location also lends itself to future economic development either on commonwealth property or for the benefit of local property owners. The site has nearby access to major highways such as Route 6, Route 81 and Route 84. There is also high capacity power and internet available to this property.

As Commissioners, we greatly appreciate the information you have provided through your "Recommendations for Potential Facility Closures" and associated documents. We would like to point out that, while your "Recommendations" mention approximately \$41,000,000 in necessary upgrades to Waymart, we noted that the "Statewide Facility Closure Guidelines" document issued in July, 2016 set that figure at a relatively more modest amount of approximately \$35,000,000. We also believe that some of these items have been, or are currently being, addressed. It should likewise be remembered that the Commonwealth recently entered into a 10 year agreement for the placement of a gas line to the facility. We mention these factors only so they might be given their proper weight in your determination of these critical issues.

Please know that all of our comments in this letter are intended by us to fulfill and enhance our responsibility to our community but are also intended to recognize the common burdens we share with you as elected officials. It is our hope that, by continuing to work together, we can further improve our region and meet the needs of our many constituents responsibly and equitably. We stand ready to assist you in this task and would welcome any questions or comments you may have. Thank you.


Brian W. Smith, Chairman


Wendell R. Kay


Joseph W. Adams

cc: Sen. Lisa Baker
Sen. John Blake
Rep. Jon Fritz
Cassandra Coleman



January 12, 2017

The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear Governor Wolf:

We are writing to urge you and the Department of Corrections to remove the State Correctional Institution in Mercer from the list of state prisons that may be closed in 2017. SCI Mercer is a keystone in the community in and around Mercer and its closing would be a devastating blow to the local economy, an increased burden for countywide law enforcement, and a potentially counterproductive step in improving the Commonwealth's criminal justice system.

The decline of the manufacturing industry in the 21st century has devastated small-town America. Nowhere is that damage more apparent than in the communities of Western Pennsylvania. Blue-collar areas like Mercer County are struggling to attract high-quality, family-sustaining employment. The county's unemployment rate stands at 5.5 percent—higher than the Commonwealth's 4.9 percent. The population of Mercer County has been bleeding away since the 1980s.

Time and time again, the interests of Washington and Harrisburg have been prioritized over the need to protect small towns and cities like Mercer, Hermitage, and Jamestown. We cannot allow the Commonwealth to turn a blind eye on the men and women who have built this nation on their backs. In 2016, the working class throughout the old manufacturing heart of this country sent a loud, clear message to the seats of power that they will not be taken for granted. The protection of SCI Mercer is an opportunity for you to let these proud citizens know that you have heard their call.

SCI Mercer employs around 400 local workers, meaning its closure would drive the county unemployment rate up nearly one full percent. The corresponding lost wages would reverberate throughout the area's economy as the displaced workers would be forced to restrict spending at other local enterprises, with the potential to remove up to \$52 million from circulation. We are grateful that we were recently able to secure a multimodal transportation grant to preserve 700 jobs in Farrell, but coupled with the recent announcements that Macy's and Sears will be closing their stores in Hermitage, that investment would be wiped out by the closing of SCI Mercer.

C: Wrodsell
1/15/17

In an area where the median household income is below \$30,000 per year and where 9 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, SCI Mercer is a source of competitive wages, life-saving benefits, and honorable, dignified employment. The prison also provides employment to veterans of our U.S. armed forces who deserve better treatment than a foreclosure on their post-service careers.

The Secretary's announcement that all workers will be offered alternate employment within the Department is a hollow offer, as the nearest facility to Mercer is over an hour away. As you well know, there is limited public transportation infrastructure in Northwestern Pennsylvania, and the cost of maintaining an automobile that must make a two-hour roundtrip commute each day would significantly drive down the benefits of continued employment within the Department.

In fact, steep costs are a broader issue for both the Commonwealth and Mercer County if SCI Mercer were closed. SCI Mercer has an average daily cost per inmate of \$107—the lowest of the five prisons on the list of potential closures. The Commonwealth will incur additional costs to shuttle inmates between their new facility and the Mercer County Courthouse for arraignments, hearings, and trials. Further, the Mercer County Jail was constructed within a half-mile of SCI Mercer with the effect of reducing costs for both the state and the county. The state Board of Probation and Parole is currently able to take state parolees directly to state prison in Mercer; the Mercer County Jail will be forced to absorb that additional cost to temporarily house parolees when there is a violation.

In addition, the facility analysis provided by the Department in announcing plans to close two prisons is inaccurate, with the effect of inflating the costs of maintaining SCI Mercer. The analysis indicates that the prison's perimeter road needs repair work and repaving; that work has been completed. Further, the analysis mentions an unspecified number of underground fuel tanks that must be replaced; that process has already begun at SCI Mercer. We are unable to determine if the analysis factors in the lower overtime costs at SCI Mercer as compared to higher costs at other facilities and are concerned this oversight may be painting an incomplete picture of the continued operating costs of the prisons.

The facility analysis also fails to capture some of the potentially sunk costs of recent investments in SCI Mercer. Pennsylvania has invested nearly \$20 million into upgrading SCI Mercer over the past decade alone—money that would be simply wasted if the facility is mothballed this year. The prison treats its own sewage and has upgraded its sewage system with a dewatering press that has the potential to save the Commonwealth upwards of \$300,000 annually. It is worth noting that the grounds of SCI Mercer are actually an asset to the Commonwealth, as it sits on additional acreage that would allow state-of-the-art expansion to house additional prisoners should the need arise.

Even more subtle costs would be shifted onto the community if SCI Mercer were shuttered. The Department's own website touts the benefits of SCI Mercer's participation in the Community Work Program, which has—among many other contributions—leveraged 9,376 hours of community service, saving at least \$67,976 in wages. And those contributions manifest in more important ways than simply dollars and cents: SCI Mercer serves local food banks, fire departments, recreation centers, fairgrounds, and the well-known highway cleanup initiative. SCI Mercer has implemented the innovative CARE Canine Program, in which inmates train stray dogs from Strayhaven Animal Shelter to ease their transition into adoption.

Our argument against the potential closure of SCI Mercer is not simply a case of elected officials trying to protect the local economy, as important as those jobs and cost-savings are. This is also a criminal justice matter. There has been broad recognition over the past decade across the political spectrum that policymakers must find a better way to punish and rehabilitate criminal offenders. We can significantly reduce prison populations—leading to even lower costs for the Commonwealth—and better protect our

communities if we can reduce the incidence of recidivism. Closing SCI Mercer would have the opposite effect, exacerbating the factors that lead convicted criminals to reoffend.

SCI Mercer is a minimum-security facility, housing the types of offenders who can successfully reenter society if they are given the supports they need. In fact, SCI Mercer has a reputation as one of the best state prisons for successful reintroduction of ex-inmates. Many of the inmates are from the area, and they are able to maintain ties to their families and support networks because they are housed locally. Those contacts will be stretched and, often, severed if inmates are removed to a location more than one hour away, especially in light of the region's limited public transportation systems. And when these inmates are released at the end of their sentences, we risk setting them free into an unfamiliar town with no safety net to help them reintegrate into society.

As the economies of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and other urban centers naturally leverage their growing populations into successful industry, the Commonwealth has the freedom to prioritize small-town and rural Pennsylvania for economic development. Many state prisons around the Commonwealth have their own challenges, including the deteriorating facility in Pittsburgh, and many of the unique services provided at other prisons have been recently implemented or can be readily transferred to a site such as SCI Mercer. We should be expanding facilities like SCI Mercer, not considering shifting their functions to other, thriving areas of the state.

We are speaking with a united voice—Senators and Representatives, Republicans and Democrats—and we are joined by community leaders representing the judiciary, law enforcement, community development, and other interests in urging you to remove SCI Mercer from the list of potential prison closings. We are requesting that additional public hearings be held so the Department can further evaluate the impact of closing prisons in small towns such as Mercer.

We believe you will agree with us that there are few places in this Commonwealth where the impact of jobs that pay will be greater than in Mercer County. Please hear our call and hear our citizens' voices when we ask you to stand up for strong small-town economies, prudent state investment, and smart criminal justice policies.

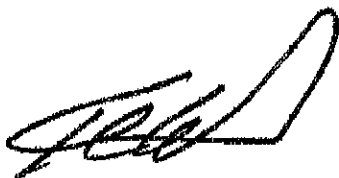
Sincerely,



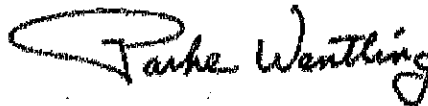
Senator Michele Brooks
50th Senatorial District
Mercer, Crawford, Erie, & Warren Counties



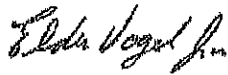
Rep. Mark A. Longietti
7th Legislative District
Mercer County



Rep. Tedd C. Nesbit
8th Legislative District
Mercer and Butler Counties



Rep. Parke Wentling
17th Legislative District
Mercer, Crawford, Erie, & Lawrence Counties



Senator Eider A. Vogel, Jr.
47th Senatorial District
Beaver, Butler, & Lawrence Counties



Rep. Chris Sainato
9th Legislative District
Lawrence County



Senator Scott E. Hutchinson
21st Senatorial District
Butler, Clarion, Forest, Venango, and Warren Counties



Senator Daniel Laughlin
49th Senatorial District
Erie County



Rep. Aaron Bernstine
10th Legislative District
Beaver, Butler and Lawrence Counties

CC: The Honorable John Wetzel, Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

Council of the City of Scranton

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Lori Reed
City Clerk

Amil Minora, Esq.
Counsel



Joseph Wechsler, President
Pat Rogan, Vice President
William Gaughan
Wayne Evans
Timothy Perry

January 13, 2017

Mr. John E. Wetzel
Secretary
Department of Corrections
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Dear Secretary Wetzel:

I am writing today in response to the recent announcement, by the State Department of Corrections, of the impending closures of State Correctional Institutions; in particular, SCI-Waymart. As you may be aware, a number of Scranton residents employed at this facility are considered to be highly trained professionals. We wholeheartedly support a reversal of the decision to close these facilities, as this may result in the relocation of its employees and their families, which would have a detrimental effect on the City.

On behalf of the fine men and women of Scranton employed at this facility, please give this matter your utmost consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph A. Wechsler
President
Scranton City Council

cc: Scranton City Council

C. Woodside
1/18
[Signature]

**DOYLE HEFFLEY, MEMBER
122ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT**

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ALBRIGHTSVILLE, PA 18218
PHONE: (570) 722-8700
FAX: (570) 722-8702

The Honorable Tom Wolf
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf;

The members of Pennsylvania's northeastern legislative delegation were dismayed to learn of your administration's decision to close two state correctional facilities (SCIs), out of five under consideration. Further, we were shocked to learn that three of those facilities are located in northeastern Pennsylvania. We are also extremely disappointed that a decision of this magnitude was made without any public input or consultation with local officials of the SCI's home communities. We urge you to delay the decision to close two of these five facilities until the public has had a chance to offer comment, local communities have a chance to adjust their budgets and plans, and the decision to take such action has been sufficiently vetted.

This monumental decision will greatly affect the operations and budgets of the host communities, the lives of those working in the facilities to be closed, and will have a devastating economic impact to the surrounding regions, and potentially put the safety of all Pennsylvanians at risk.

We understand Pennsylvania's looming budget constraints are daunting and are willing to work with you to achieve the necessary cost savings to reach a balanced budget. However, we do not believe such decisions should be done in a vacuum at the risk to public safety. Our current state inmate population is overcapacity and we are paying counties to house state inmates in their facilities. To close two SCIs will exacerbate this situation and lead to dangerous overcrowding which puts the public and Department of Corrections (DOC) employees at great risk.

The three facilities in northeastern Pennsylvania are located in rural economically depressed regions and are the major employers for their areas. Closing these facilities within six months will cause a harmful economic impact through the region that will negatively affect everything from small businesses to power



House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

January 13, 2017

COMMITTEES

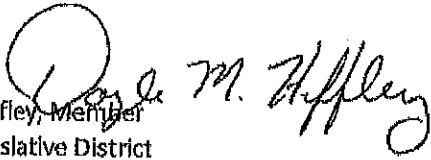
GAME AND FISHERIES
HUMAN SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION
TOURISM

generating stations. Families may be forced to move from these areas as they seek employment at other SCIs and property values will fall.

In short, we believe that 2017-18 cost savings derived from the DOC budget should come from a comprehensive look at the entire SCI system and not be focused on these selected facilities. Such far ranging actions must be made with complete transparency and input from the public. Therefore we ask you again to delay the closing of any SCIs until a full review can be done with public input.

Sincerely,

Doyle Heffley, Member
122nd Legislative District

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doyle M. Heffley". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name and title.

JONATHAN A. FRITZ, MEMBER

ROOM 414, IRVIS OFFICE BUILDING
PO BOX 202111
HARRISBURG PA 17120-2111
717-783-2910
FAX: 717-782-2967

DISTRICT OFFICES:
16501 STATE RTE 706 STE 2
MONTROSE PA 18601-82200
670-278-3374
FAX: 670-278-2952

32 COMMERCIAL ST STE 300
WAYNE COUNTY VISITOR'S CENTER
HONESDALE PA 18431
670-253-5533
FAX: 670-253-8046



WEB: repfritzpa.com
EMAIL: jfritz@pahousegop.com

House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

January 13, 2016

Secretary John Wetzel
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Dear Secretary Wetzel:

It is of grave concern to learn that SCI Waymart is being considered for closure. SCI Waymart has long been viewed as the pre-eminent mental health correctional facility in the Commonwealth. That critical focus and mission, alone, should remove SCI Waymart from the list of facilities being considered for closure, but I will provide additional justification for keeping it operational.

First, we have a rural economy in Wayne County and the immediate region. We are not diverse in jobs and employment opportunity. Wayne County already "takes it on the chin" in being deprived of economic opportunity because of the unjust and wholly unreasonable ban on natural gas drilling. We can look to neighboring Susquehanna County (part of my legislative district) to see the vast opportunity, benefits and economic stimulation that comes with natural gas.

Next, SCI Waymart has already undergone considerable upgrades and is poised for growth, not mothballing. It now has inexpensive and clean-burning natural gas as a fuel source. It has upgraded its water and wastewater infrastructure, undergone roofing improvements and razed outdated portions of the facility to realize additional efficiency.

SCI Waymart is an institution that not only supports 725-plus hard-working, devoted employees, but also sets the standard for corrections and inmate care in a time that our Commonwealth is struggling with mental health issues and a crippling opioid and heroin epidemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Fritz".

Jonathan Fritz
State Representative
111th District

*c: Woodside
1/18/16*



Mike Schlossberg

CHAIR

Lehigh County

331 Irvis Office Building
P.O. Box 202132
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2132
(717) 705-1869

MEMBERS:

Berks County
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Lackawanna County
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Eddie Day Pashinski

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Maureen Madden

Northampton County
Robert L. Freeman
Steve Samuelson

Schuylkill County
Neal P. Goodman

NORTHEAST DELEGATION

January 13, 2017

Tom Wolf, Governor
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

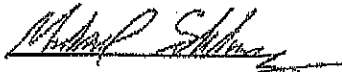
We are writing you to express our dismay at the recent Department of Corrections announcement of the impending closure of two State Correctional Facilities.

As you may know, the Northeastern region of the Commonwealth has been disproportionately impacted by these decisions with three of the five announced facilities within the delegation's boundaries. With fewer than six months of notice, staff and their families may be forced to relocate from the areas around SCI Frackville, SCI Retreat, and SCI Waymart as they seek employment at other correctional institutions or in other fields. The accelerated time-frame for these closures also presents an undue hardship on the employees and their families. Moreover, a June deadline is insufficient to prepare the regions surrounding SCI Frackville and SCI Retreat to weather any potential economic fallout that these closures may impose on the local economy.

Decisions made by previous administrations have brought us to this unfortunate point. We appreciate that the upcoming budget debates and their associated discussions make these choices monumentally difficult. And although we may disagree with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle as to how we reach our goals, we fully believe that the best way to achieve a stronger Commonwealth is through the difficult task of listening to opposing views and finding common ground. Allowing effected communities the ability to provide public comment and giving policy-makers the opportunity for thoughtful deliberation is vital to finding that common-ground and making the best decisions.

The members of the Northeast Delegation respectfully ask that you delay any decision until the surrounding regions and the affected communities have been afforded the chance for public comment. We thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent request. We look forward to discussing any questions you may have regarding this correspondence.

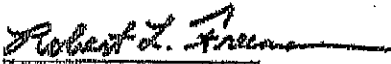
Sincerely,



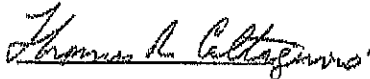
Rep. Michael H. Schlossberg
132nd Legislative District



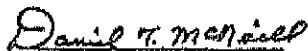
Rep. Gerald J. Mullery
119th Legislative District



Rep. Robert L. Freeman
136th Legislative District



Rep. Thomas R. Caltagirone
127th Legislative District



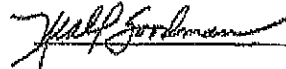
Rep. Daniel T. McNeill
133rd Legislative District



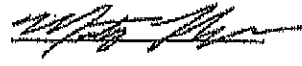
Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski
121st Legislative District



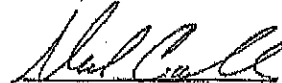
Rep. Maureen Madden
115th Legislative District



Rep. Neal P. Goodman
123rd Legislative District



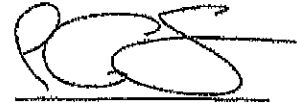
Rep. Marty Flynn
113th Legislative District



Rep. Mike Carroll
118th Legislative District



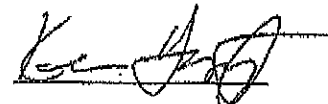
Rep. Sid Michaels Kavulich
114th Legislative District



Rep. Peter Schweyer
22nd Legislative District



Rep. Steve Samuelson
135th Legislative District



Rep. Kevin Haggerty
112th Legislative District



January 18, 2017

The Honorable Dennis Davin
Secretary, Department of Community & Economic Development
Fourth Floor, Commonwealth Keystone Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Kathy Manderino
Secretary, Department of Labor & Industry
1700 Labor & Industry Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: SCI Frackville - economic impact of closure

Dear Secretaries Davin and Manderino:

We understand your agencies are preparing economic impact reports for each of the five communities with state correctional facilities under consideration for closing. We are writing to provide as much information as possible to assist you with evaluating the impact on our community if SCI Frackville closes.

No doubt every community under consideration is saying the loss of its state prison would be devastating. We believe our community would be the most negatively impacted.

First, we are the only community of the five that could be impacted by *two* state facility closings in coming months. Please don't forget the governor announced last week the upcoming closure of nearby Hamburg State Center, with 353 employees who could lose their jobs. Though physically located in Berks County, many Schuylkill County residents work there. The combined loss of these two facilities is over 760 jobs – not just the 409 jobs projected by the Department of Corrections.

SCI Frackville is one of our area's largest employers. The coal mines and garment factories that employed generations of our residents are long gone. And we have had an unfortunate spate of other closings in recent years. In the past two years alone, plant closings and company reductions have led to the loss of 508 jobs. The nearby shopping mall that once employed hundreds of people just went into bankruptcy.

Schuylkill County cannot sustain these losses. We have the highest unemployment rate of the five communities under consideration – and a seasonally adjusted rate of 6.2 percent. Thirteen percent of our residents live below the poverty line. The county median household income is \$45,020 – that's *household* income – compared to the average salary of a single corrections officer at SCI Frackville of \$56,790. The median household income in nearby Frackville borough is just \$39,355. By contrast, the statewide median household income is \$53,599.

And the tax base is ever-shrinking. Ryan Township, where the prison is located, estimates the loss of taxes generated from those employed by the prison equates to one mill of tax. The revenue it receives from the Local Services Tax alone is 5 percent of the total budget.

SCI Frackville is the Frackville Area Municipal Authority's (FAMA) largest customer. Its annual costs of \$348,000 make up 23 percent of total sewer collections. If the authority loses this customer, resident rate payers will bear a crushing burden. In recent years, FAMA has undertaken more than \$1.5 million in capital improvements to provide reliable sewer service to the prison and the community. Moreover, in November 2016, FAMA completed a new agreement with the Commonwealth that guaranteed no rate increases for 10 years, at considerable risk to the authority. Prior to this agreement, it was found revenue collected from FAMA customers had been subsidizing the cost to serve the prison since the 1990s.

Schuylkill County Municipal Authority (SCMA) provides water to the prison – about 76 million gallons a year. The prison contributes \$283,123 a year in revenue and represents about 5.5 percent of the annual revenue stream for drinking water. SCMA is about to undertake a \$380,000 project to replace 1,200 feet of 10" waterline that serves the prison with 12" polyethylene encased ductile iron waterlines. As part of the project, West Mahanoy Township is going to undertake a \$200,000 project to repave Altamont Boulevard, which is an access route to the prison. The state has already committed \$100,000 to this project through the Commonwealth Financing Authority.

Wheelabrator Frackville is a cogeneration facility that provides 66 million pounds of steam annually to SCI Frackville. Annual revenue for steam sold is approximately \$700,000. The loss of this revenue would jeopardize the 28 residents who work at Wheelabrator. The prison contract has provided Wheelabrator an opportunity to keep its facility running while other plants have been forced to shut down due to the economy. Wheelabrator also plays a key role in the community through the safe disposal of more than 500,000 tons of culm each year from an average of 12 abandoned strip pits. Since opening in 1988, the facility has reclaimed and restored more than 135 acres of land previously obscured by abandoned coal pits and mining waste.

County officials worked hard to bring SCI Frackville to our community. Ryan Township supervisors created a zoning classification, at the request of the Commonwealth, specifically related to the use of the property for "Governmental-Correction/Rehabilitation Use." In addition, the county economic development agency sold the 212 acres to the state for \$1,000 per acre, which was a 90 percent discount of what industrial property was selling for in 1983.

Our county residents work hard. It is what we are known for. The 409 individuals, who work at SCI Frackville, and the thousands of others, who work at other companies potentially impacted through ripple effects, are counting on us to help them keep their jobs. They are also counting on you to do a thorough analysis of the impact a decision to close SCI Frackville will have on them, their families, their neighbors, and the entire community. We have collected over 3000 signatures asking Governor Wolf and Secretary Wetzel to keep SCI Frackville open. We ask that you do everything you can to make a fair economic impact assessment.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this information. If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,




Neal P. Goodman
123rd House District



Jerry Knowles
124th House District



Mike Tobash
125th House District



David G. Argall
29th Senate District

Cc: Governor Tom Wolf
Secretary John Wetzel, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections
Diana Woodside, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

JAKE WHEATLEY, JR., MEMBER

36 EAST WING
P.O. BOX 202019
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2019
FINANCE COMMITTEE: (717) 783-1614
19TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT: (717) 783-3783

WEBSITE: WWW.PAHOUSE.COM/WHEATLEY
EMAIL: JWHEATLEY@PAHOUSE.NET



DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN
FINANCE COMMITTEE

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE,
TREASURER
PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE HUNGER CAUCUS,
CO-CHAIR
AFTERSCHOOL CAUCUS, CO-CHAIR

House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

January 19th, 2017

The Honorable Governor Tom Wolf:

We are writing regarding your recent announcement that you are considering closing five state correctional institutions. Respectfully, we are asking you to remove SCI Pittsburgh from the list of potential closings. We know this is a difficult decision and you will have to weigh all the options, but as the prison is located in the second-largest county and city in the Commonwealth, SCI Pittsburgh is a vital location that should remain open.

Nearly a quarter of all inmates in SCI Pittsburgh are Allegheny County residents. We believe you understand one of the keys to combating recidivism is to ensure an inmate's family stays in touch and remains involved in the inmate's life. If these inmates are relocated to rural facilities in other counties it could cause additional hardship and add barriers for families wishing to visit. For those inmates whose families won't be able to afford a further trip, for financial or logistical reasons, we fear it will directly affect their rate of recidivism.

SCI Pittsburgh is also a leader in programs designed to provide education to inmates on a variety of topics and foster rehabilitation while incarcerated. The facility specializes in treating inmates with substance abuse problems. They offer culinary, electrical, janitorial maintenance, and computer trainings. They have a fiber-optics training that teaches inmates the process of installment. Inmates can complete a barber training that will enable them to receive a barber license while incarcerated. It is clear that while these inmates are serving their debt to the commonwealth in this facility they are able to receive tangible opportunities to learn skills that will enable them to re-enter society and be productive citizens. SCI Pittsburgh is taking a lead in committing to that transition and it is paramount that the facility remains open to be able to continue this needed work.

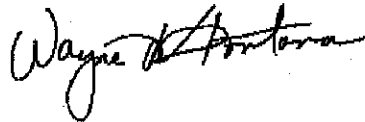
Lastly, from a financial perspective, when inmates from other facilities in the western region need to be taken to hospitals in Pittsburgh, it costs the state significantly more if SCI Pittsburgh staff is not available. This was a costly lesson learned in 2005 when SCI Pittsburgh was closed for a short time. According to SCI Pittsburgh, the annual additional travel cost for personnel alone would be over \$267,000 if SCI Pittsburgh staff were no longer available to help with protection during hospital visits.

We recently toured the facility at SCI Pittsburgh to view their programs and were impressed with their focus on providing skills that will aid inmates in their transition back into our commonwealth. We encourage you to go and see the good work being done by the guards and staff on site. We believe the community and the City of Pittsburgh will be better served by keeping SCI Pittsburgh open. Please know we are available any time to discuss this matter and hope we can continue a dialogue before any final decisions are made.

Respectfully,



Jake Wheatley Jr.
State Representative
19th Legislative District



Wayne D. Fontana
State Senator
42nd Senatorial District



Adam Ravenstahl
State Representative
20th Legislative District



Jay Costa
State Senator
43rd Senatorial District

CC: John D. Wetzel Secretary of Corrections,
Will Danowski Secretary of Legislative Affairs,
State Representative Frank Dermody 33rd Legislative District and House Democratic Leader



January 19, 2017

The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA

Dear Governor Wolf:

As the executive directors of the four chambers of commerce that represent Mercer County, a rural area that is a perfect example of all that is the best of small town America, we are sending this letter to share our unified concern about the possible closing of the State Correctional Institution located in Mercer, Pa. Closing this state prison would be devastating to the local economy in our county and the Western Pennsylvania region. We urge you and the Department of Corrections to remove the SCI Mercer from the list of state prisons that may be closed in 2017.


The county's unemployment rate is 5.5% - higher than the state's unemployment rate of 4.9%. A facility closing of this magnitude would just add to the employment challenges in our county. Though our rural area can't begin to compete with the attention paid to larger areas in Pennsylvania, such as Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, it is because of this very rural nature that Mercer County and the surrounding region needs the attention all the more and the support of our state governor's office protecting our jobs and quality of life.

If the state decides to close our Mercer SCI, more than 400 jobs will be lost, increasing our county's unemployment rate and potentially pushing those displaced to relocate to out of the area, which will in turn create a ripple effect, creating a downturn in our local tax base and school systems among other challenges. We already contend with a median household income that is below \$30,000 and the loss of SCI Mercer's competitive wages in our county would have a dire effect on an already troubled local and regional economy.

Another unfortunate ripple effect of this potential closure includes the loss of SCI Mercer's participation in the Community Work Program and the assistance they provide to our county's food bank, fire departments and highway cleanup initiative, among others. Sadly there are few places in the state that would be as harshly impacted as Mercer County would be if SCI Mercer is shut down.

Because of the urgency of this potential job loss, the four chambers of Mercer County are sending a united message to Harrisburg asking to remove SCI Mercer from the list of potential closings. We also request an additional hearing to make our case against shutting down this much needed job resource in our county. Please show us that our rural county's economy, which has a demonstrable need to keep every job it can within its border, is important to our state capitol and will be supported by our state government.

Sincerely,


Janice Schwanbeck
Greenville Area
Chamber of Commerce


Beth Black
Grove City
Chamber of Commerce


Doty Pintar
Mercer Area
Chamber of Commerce


Sherris Moreira
Shenango Valley
Chamber of Commerce



Penn-Northwest

Affordable Solutions for Corporate Expansion

January 20, 2017

The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear Governor Wolf:

We are writing this collectively, as a unit, on behalf of Penn-Northwest Development Corporation in an effort to convince you to not shut down SCI Mercer. We feel compelled to write this in an effort to protect the county's fragile economic state. In this letter, we will be pointing out the overwhelming evidence of SCI Mercer being an economic structure that is valued and necessary not only to the Mercer County community, but to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Shutting down this facility will undoubtedly cause irreparable damage to this community and to the Commonwealth's economy. As Mercer County's lead economic development agency, our insight is worth bearing in mind as we all focus to keep the local and Commonwealth economies from taking a devastating dive, while also balancing cost savings considerations. We hope you can agree that not only is SCI Mercer one of the more successful prisons in the state, but it is essential to the county's livelihood.

We urge you to remove SCI Mercer from the list of potential facilities under consideration for closure. In a county where the average household income is less than \$45,000 per year, SCI Mercer is a keystone opportunity that offers a full scale of benefits, healthcare, and dignified, proud work for the employees and residents of Mercer County. Because 14.2% of the population is below the poverty line, SCI Mercer is a unique career opportunity in our community. Workers serving at this facility include single mothers, Veterans, and retired police officers. Each and every one of these individuals is honorable, hard working and deserving of the position they hold. Most importantly, they count on this job to provide for their home and their families.

Of the prisons at hand, SCI Mercer has the lowest daily cost per inmate rate (at \$107 a day per prisoner). As such, the Commonwealth would actually face raised costs should SCI Mercer close. Moreover, SCI Mercer was built intentionally within a mile from the county jail to relieve bussing and transfer costs, as well as for the convenience of transportation of parolees. The county would incur steeper transportation costs for arraignments, trials, and sentencing hearings for shuttling prisoners to and from another facility. Furthermore, SCI Mercer is one of the newer facilities of those under consideration and more than \$20 million dollars in renovations have taken place over the last ten years. The analysis provided by the Department of Corrections indicated that underground fuel tanks need replacing; however, this is a process that has already begun. SCI Mercer also maintains its own septic system, which saves the Commonwealth over \$250,000 per year. In actuality, SCI Mercer's upkeep costs are projected to be grossly higher than the actual cost portrayed in the DOC's report.

SCI Mercer has saved the community over \$67,000 in wages through their Community Work Program. This program also permits the facility to take action in true community service by serving local food banks, fairgrounds, highway litter control, and an array of other works that keep our community thriving. Economically speaking, SCI Mercer has one of the best records for inmate rehabilitation and inmate reentry to society. Their success rate is one the highest in the Commonwealth.

39 CHESTNUT AVENUE ■ SHARON, PA 16146 ■ P. 724-662-3705 ■ F. 724-662-0283

To shut down SCI Mercer would take the county's unemployment rate from 5.5% to approximately 6.6%. Let us be reminded that filling in a 1% unemployment gap would take years, especially in a community where hundreds of other jobs are presently threatened with the recent announcements concerning the closures of Sears and Macys in Hermitage. Small towns, such as Mercer, Farrell, Jamestown, and Grove City seem to get left behind when Harrisburg's or Philadelphia's economics get threatened.

The secretary's promise of relocating all correction officers and employees to other facilities isn't ideal for an area such as Mercer. Northwestern Pennsylvania does not have public transportation options that would offer transportation to the closest facility, an hour or more from Mercer. Incurring the maintenance cost of a vehicle capable to conduct a two-hour commute per day will not only be a burdensome cost, but would also cost time for the families of inmates. Certainly job replacement for SCI Mercer employees, in this area, is easier said than done. Those affected employees need to be reassured that these are the types of considerations taking place for each community under possible facility shut down: Is there local transportation? Is the commute longer? Are the wages paid the same or will these displaced employees end up with a rate cut? It is not in our Commonwealth's best interest to close SCI Mercer. The people in this area count on this facility for more than its building and inmate housing capabilities, but also for the quality of life afforded by valuable employment opportunity and through programs the facility offers this community and its inmates.

Penn-Northwest Development Corporation stands with the Mercer County community, Senator Michelle Brooks, Representative Mark Longletti, Representative Tedd C. Nesbit, Representative Parke Wentling, Senator Elder A. Vogel, Jr., Representative Chris Sainato, Senator Scott E. Hutchinson, Senator Daniel Laughlin, and a long list of working class residents in urging you to make the right decision and keep SCI Mercer fully operational. We have faith in your judgment and we are confident you will acknowledge the undeniable benefits in maintaining this facility and supporting the Mercer County community and, in turn, the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Randy P. Seitz
President/CEO
Penn-Northwest Development Corp

James Grasso, Chairman
President
Liberty Steel Products, Inc

Doug Thomas, Vice Chair
President
Thomas Construction, Inc.

Matthew McConnell, Second Vice Chair
Chairman
Mercer County Commissioners

Scott Free, Treasurer
Treasurer
First National Bank

Douglas Riley, Secretary
Chairman
MCIDA

John Thigpen, Assist. Treasurer/Secretary
General Manager
Ilisco Extrusions, Inc.

Lew Kachulis, Immediate Past Chair
President
Synergy Comp Insurance Company

Jason Roeback, PNDC Board of Directors
Chief Executive Officer
Sharon Regional Health System

Drew Pierce, PNDC Board of Directors
Chief Executive Officer
The Primary Health Network

From: Peggy Mazyck
Sent: Thursday, January 19, 2017 2:14 PM
To: 'Sechoka, Elizabeth'
Subject: RE: Impact on "Tourism" from Possible Closure of SCI Mercer County

Hi Elizabeth,

Below is the impact on Mercer County Tourism if the Mercer County State Correctional Institute is closed.

Mercer County has always enjoyed a large influx of visitors from Canada. However in the last year this traffic has declined due to an exchange rate where Canadians only receive about .70 cents on their dollar. This has had a negative impact on overnight stays, shopping, dining, golf and motorcoach traffic.

The closing of the Mercer County State Correctional Institute would be further blow to Mercer County's economy at a time when we developing programs to help us deal with the decline in Canadian traffic.

The Comfort Inn in the Mercer area of the county indicate that they host training, visiting doctors and family visiting imates on a regular basis.

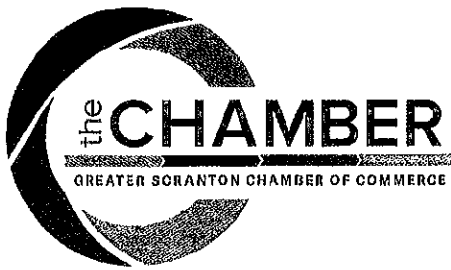
In the Grove City area of the county, hotels indicate that they receive a couple hundred room nights from State Government Travel. They don't track specifically to the Mercer County Correctional Institute, but a percentage of these rooms would be correction department travelers including probation/parole officers, inspectors, etc.

Losing 400 employees in our area would have a very negatve impact on a county our size. It would be much more difficult for us to recover from this loss than a larger area with a larger population.

Peggy

Peggy Mazyck, President/CEO
VisitMercerCountyPA
50 North Water Ave.
Sharon, PA 16146

Phone: 724-346-3771
Cell: 724--971-3544
Url: www.VisitMercerCountyPA.com
Email: mcpa@VisitMercerCountyPA.com



January 20, 2017

Hon. Tom Wolf
Governor
508 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Hon. John Wetzel, Secretary
PA Department of Corrections
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Dear Governor Wolf and Secretary Wetzel:

The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce serves as the primary business support organization for Lackawanna County. As leaders of the Chamber, representing more than 1,500 member businesses and their employees, we wish to address the proposed closing of the State Correctional Institute (SCI) at Waymart.

Our organization is an engaged regional partner with the mission of attracting, sustaining and growing jobs in northeastern Pennsylvania. We want for every man and woman in our region to reap the benefits of and dignity from a quality job with a family-sustaining income. SCI Waymart fulfills that mission for more than 700 employees – nearly 400 of whom reside in Lackawanna County.

Although the SCI Waymart facility is located in Wayne County, its impact is truly regional. With a \$100 million budget, and an \$83 million payroll, this institution plays a critical role in our regional economy.

The physical plant is served by public/private utilities that have invested substantially in modern infrastructure for the site. Further, scores of local vendors provide direct or ancillary amenities to the facility, such as medical, food, laundry, gas, and postal services. Likewise, municipal and county governments have invested substantial, scarce local public safety and public works resources, for the benefit of the institution.


More broadly, the residual impact of the more than 700 employees at SCI Waymart supports the entire spectrum of regional business sectors – housing, transportation, medical, commercial, educational and retail services. This generates in excess of \$100 million, above and beyond the Commonwealth's investment, and adds hundreds of additional jobs to the regional economy.

Not to be ignored are the important public safety issues potentially compromised by a possible closure – though we will leave it to the professionals in the fields of corrections and law enforcement to more appropriately and effectively address those matters.

We are painfully aware of the budgetary challenges facing the Commonwealth and recognize the need to look at all aspects of state government spending to address this crisis -- including the Department of Corrections, and with that the operations of SCI Waymart. It is equally self-evident that the closure of SCI Waymart would do irreparable economic and social harm to the citizens of northeastern Pennsylvania. As such, we respectfully ask the Administration to seek budgetary relief in a more balanced fashion that does not rely on the severe act of closing this vital institution.

Respectfully,


Mark Volk
Chamber Board Chair


Robert F. Durkin
Chamber President

222 MULBERRY STREET / P.O. BOX 431, SCRANTON, PA 18501-0431 P 570.342.7711 F 570.347.6262