




Pennsylvania
Department of Corrections

TO Dr. Laurel R. Harry
Secretary of Corrections

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DATE February 7, 2025

RE Proposal for Prison Closures

In preparation for compliance with Act 133 of 2018, (Public Safety Facilities Act) and implementation of the Department's Statewide Facility Closure Guidelines, representatives from the Department of Corrections (DOC) Steering Committee proposes and provides justification to consider the closure of the State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Rockview and the Quehanna Boot Camp. Notice of the DOC proposal to close the prisons triggers the statutory review process, at the conclusion of which the DOC must issue a final decision on whether either or both facilities will be closed.

The closure proposals originated from the Resource Evaluation and Mission Alliance Project (REMAP) process and are predicated upon consideration of intersecting factors that have stretched both staffing and fiscal resources. Since the onset of the COVID pandemic, the Department's Corrections Officer (CO) vacancy rate steadily increased, climbing to an unprecedented high of 10.5% in October 2022. Despite a record hiring pace of more than 2,500 Corrections Officer Trainees (COTs) over the 2023 and 2024 calendar years, the Department consistently maintains a high number of CO vacancies. As of December 31, 2024, the vacancy rate hovered at 5.2% across the CO spectrum.

CO vacancies are typically covered by officers working overtime. Over the last two full fiscal years, more than 1.36M hours of overtime were necessary to fill vacant positions at a cost of more than \$70.5M. The volume of overtime hours necessary to sustain safe staffing levels across 24 facilities continues to overtax staff and likely contributes to the elevated turnover and washout rates observed. Moreover, the costs associated with paying for those overtime hours have consistently exceeded budget allocations, diverting resources from intended purposes.

Meanwhile, since the closure of SCI Retreat in June 2020, the Department's institutional population declined by another 2,829 inmates, while the combined male population of SCI Rockview and Quehanna Boot Camp was 2,457 as of February 6, 2025.

A December 31, 2024, population snapshot revealed that only 82.2% of the approximately 46,500 total institutional beds in the DOC system were filled. The total institutional beds include those beds taken offline temporarily, but that could be reopened. After subtracting the nearly 1,800 beds lost due to single celling across the system and removing SCI Rockview and Quehanna Boot Camp from the equation, there are approximately 4,200 total online male beds left empty across the Department. The total includes all specialty beds and all are not immediately usable (i.e. nearly 1,600 of those beds are Custody Level 5 [CL5] beds). However, there are approximately 2,000 additional offline beds that were temporarily closed for cost savings measures and/or renovation that could be reopened to accommodate relocation of the populations from SCI Rockview and Quehanna Boot Camp.

Because operational efficiencies increase as capacity percentage increases, the Department can reduce staffing strains, overtime costs, and operational inefficiencies, while also maintaining the security and safety of staff and inmates by consolidating its population into fewer facilities.

The Department of General Services (DGS) contracted with Carter Goble Lee (CGL) Companies in 2022 to conduct a spatial and structural analysis of Department facilities. CGL's work with the Department began in 2023 and continued throughout 2024. As part of the analysis, CGL contracted with JFA Associates to produce a ten-year population projection. Consistent with the Department's internal projections, the JFA projection confirmed that capacity remaining after the proposed closures would be sufficient to absorb the population growth projected over the next decade.

Steering Committee Objectives:

The Steering Committee aims to deliver a data-driven analysis that is sensitive to the dignity and respect public servants, inmates, and communities impacted by this proposal deserve. The committee also endeavors to provide realistic expectations for the benefits and potential consequences of implementing either or both of the closure proposals. With these principles in mind, the committee will strive to meet the following objectives as it continues its work with the stakeholders identified in Act 133:

- Maintain transparent, open, and pragmatic communications with stakeholders.
- Comply with the requirements and timelines of the Public Safety Facilities Act (Act 133 of 2018).
- Ensure that all employees are offered continued employment at another SCI within 67 miles of the closed facility and allow for relocation to facilities outside the radius as requested.
- Provide supportive resources to maintain the wellness of all employees, through the utilization of SEAP and CISM resources.
- Maintain the safety and security of the staff, inmates, and public.

Rationale for Proposal:

The Steering Committee conducted a thorough review of multiple variables in reaching its conclusion to propose the closures of both SCI Rockview and Quehanna Boot Camp. Those variables focused on the ability to reassign staff displaced by the closure, physical plant capabilities and needs, and the ability to efficiently relocate the inmate population and meet their service needs. Executive leadership participated in multiple meetings with CGL Companies, where they shared their assessments of our facilities. Additionally, committee members reviewed the Master Facility List, population reports, and other internal reports when formulating its proposals which are detailed for each facility.

SCI Rockview is proposed for closure for the following reasons:

- SCI Rockview was built in 1915 and is the second-oldest facility in the Department.
- The facility would require approximately \$74M in upgrades over the next five years, including crucial projects such as roofs, waterlines, showering facilities, a boiler system, and exterior repairs. Lastly, the main road inside the facility and the perimeter road both need to be repaired and repaved.
 - The average building condition is rated as "fair" and major systems, such as storm water, potable water, sanitary sewer, electrical, and heating systems are more than 50 years old.

- The multi-tiered housing and other original housing units have limited lines of sight and limit the opportunity for supervision of the inmate population in comparison to the open design of modern facilities.
- There is more than adequate capacity to relocate the specialized populations in the Residential Treatment Unit (RTU), Diversionary Treatment Unit (DTU) and Behavior Management Unit (BMU) populations within existing units throughout the Department. The facility operates a 12-bed Neuro-Cognitive Care Unit (NCCU) for inmates with high acuity memory care needs; however, the inmates from this unit could be accommodated by relocating the unit to another male facility.
- The facility cannot easily accommodate inmates in wheelchairs and has limited cells designed for handicapped individuals. The facility is ill-equipped to manage the aging population trends observed during the last quarter century.
- The specialized units that are on-grounds and supported by the facility, such as, but not limited to the Forestry Camp, Continuity of Government/Execution Complex, Warehouse, and Security Processing Center, could be supported by SCI Benner Township, which shares the same grounds as SCI Rockview.
- SCI Rockview employs approximately 658 total staff and approximately 17.9% (118) were eligible for retirement at the time of analysis; with another 3.0% (20) becoming eligible during the timeline for closure, if approved.
- Five other facilities are within a 67-mile driving radius, providing opportunities for affected employees to relocate. Those facilities include SCI Benner Township (on the same grounds), SCI Houtzdale (41 miles), SCI Smithfield (38 miles) and SCI Huntingdon (38 miles) and SCI Muncy (67 miles).
 - Three of the five facilities within the 67-mile radius maintain a CO vacancy rate greater than the Department’s average. As of January 13, 2025, there were a combined 88 vacancies across these facilities and the redeployment of Rockview’s staff has the potential to positively impact overtime demands at each of these locations.
 - Moreover, an analysis in the fall of 2024 revealed that the five most likely landing facilities had an approximate combined total of 518 staff who were currently eligible for retirement and an additional 95 who would become eligible during the closure process, if approved. Reallocating these staff through a closure has the potential to fill critical anticipated vacancies with experienced staff and save onboarding/training costs associated with new hires.
 - It is likely that additional facilities may be included as landing sites based upon employee home address and preferences; therefore, it is likely that additional vacancies and anticipated retirements could be offset.
- SCI Rockview is rated as a Security Level 3 facility. As of January 17, 2025, SCI Rockview housed 2,148 inmates. The inmate population Custody Level (CL) distribution is as follows. Notably, 82% of the population fell into the CL2 and CL3 categories, meaning that the vast majority of the population could be relocated to any male facility.
 - CL2: 1,135 (53%)
 - CL3: 629 (29%)
 - CL4: 236 (11%)
 - CL5: 93 (4%)
- As of January 19, 2025, SCI Rockview’s mental health roster population was distributed as follows. It is noted that 165 inmates were housed on the RTU. At the same time, there were 270 RTU beds available across the male facilities, meaning that there is adequate space to relocate these individuals and meet their mental health needs.

- A-Roster: 607 (29%)
- B-Roster: 552 (26%)
- C-Roster: 696 (33%)
- D-Roster: 257 (12%)
- Less than 7% of the inmate population is committed by a contiguous county. Transfer to another SCI may enhance opportunities for family connection and reentry for a portion of the population.
- Estimated mothballing costs are higher than most facilities at \$2,525,548 in fiscal year 25-26; however, that amount is a significant trade-off in comparison to the \$74M in essential upgrades.
- The impact to the Pennsylvania Correctional Industries (PCI) woodshop and furniture restoration shops are a variable and require further analysis during the formal review process, should this proposal be accepted. Both shops require significant space.

Quehanna Boot Camp is proposed closure for the following reasons:

- Quehanna Boot Camp was built in 1957 and acquired by the Department in 1991 to fulfill the specialized mission of facilitating the boot camp program. Because eligibility criteria for the program were restrictively limited to a subset of lower risk inmates, the facility does not possess the traditional security measures such as a fence to house the majority of inmates committed to our system.
 - Quehanna Boot Camp is rated as a Security Level 2 facility and only holds inmates at the CL2 level who are eligible for the boot camp program, State Drug Treatment Program (SDTP), or Short Sentence Parole (SSP).
 - There are public safety concerns that necessitate stringent selection of the inmate population, exemplified by walk-offs from the facility in 2015 and 2023.
 - Because a state highway runs through the middle of the facility, constructing a secure perimeter around the facility is not practicable. Constructing a secure perimeter and installing a Perimeter Intrusion Detection System (PIDS) would require at least \$6M to \$7M, if there were a way to overcome the challenge of a state highway running between the two halves of the facility.
- The facility consistently struggles to maintain a meaningful level of capacity. Year-end population capacity during the last five years was 53.9% (2020), 67.4% (2021), 67.1% (2022), 75.1% (2023) and 56.9% (2024).
 - Through the advent of JRI2 and alternative options to earn early release, the Department has seen boot camp participation decline precipitously and this population cannot sustain operation of the facility. As of January 8, 2025, there were only 36 men and five women participating in the boot camp program.
 - Although the Department expanded Quehanna Boot Camp housing eligibility to the SDTP population (and its predecessor – SIP State Intermediate Punishment) in the early 2000s, the addition of this population is not enough to approach capacity at the facility and the program has seen its own decline of participants who could be housed at Quehanna Boot Camp in the last year.
 - Finally, despite opening housing at Quehanna Boot Camp to SSP inmates within range of their minimum sentence, expansion of housing to this population has not led to a meaningful increase in the number of boot camp residents.
- The male boot camp program can readily be relocated to any facility, and the female population can be relocated to SCI Cambridge Springs.

- The SDTP already operates in alternate locations, including SCIs Cambridge Springs for female SDTP eligible candidates, and SCI Houtzdale and SCI Laurel Highlands for male SDTP eligible candidates who do not meet the criteria for housing at Quehanna Boot Camp.
- At present, the facility needs approximately \$5.7M in upgrades, including generators, paving, and HVAC. The CGL assessment estimates that ten-year needs rise to approximately \$12.4M.
- Quehanna Boot Camp employs approximately 234 staff and 21.8% (51) were eligible for retirement at the time of analysis, with another 3.4% (8) becoming eligible during the timeline for closure, if approved.
- There are four facilities within a 67-mile radius where employees may most conveniently relocate. Those facilities include SCI Benner Township (41 miles), SCI Houtzdale (36 miles), SCI Smithfield (62 miles) and SCI Huntingdon (62 miles). While outside the 67-mile radius, a fifth option would be SCI Forest at 73 miles, and a sixth option is SCI Pine Grove that is within 80 miles.
 - Three of the four facilities within the 67-mile radius maintain a CO vacancy rate greater than the Department's average. As of January 13, 2025, there were a combined 87 CO vacancies across these facilities and the redeployment of Quehanna Boot Camp's staff has the potential to positively impact both the vacancy and overtime demands at each of these locations.
 - An analysis in the fall of 2024 revealed that the four most likely landing facilities had a combined total of 414 staff who were currently eligible for retirement and an additional 68 who would become eligible during the closure process, if approved. Those totals rise to 555 and 90 respectively if SCI Forest were added as a potential landing facility. If Pine Grove were considered, there were an additional 106 staff eligible for retirement with another 12 anticipated to become eligible during a closure period, if approved. Reallocating these staff through a closure has the potential to fill critical anticipated vacancies with experienced staff and save onboarding/training costs associated with new hires.
- As of January 17, 2025, the Quehanna Boot Camp housed 348 total inmates, 46 females, and 302 males. All inmates are CL2 and could be housed in any facility. There are sufficient beds in both our female and male facilities to house these inmates.
- Less than 7% of the inmates are committed by a contiguous county. Coupled with the short-term, transient nature of the population, transfer to another SCI through may enhance opportunities for family connection and reentry for a portion of the population.
- Estimated mothballing costs of \$330,605 in fiscal year 25-26 are minimal.

Anticipated Savings:

SCI Rockview's most recent complete fiscal year expenditures (FY22-23) were approximately \$110M, of which, approximately \$86M was allocated to personnel costs. Closure of the facility would potentially offset approximately \$24M in operational costs, minus approximately \$2.5M in mothballing costs and additional legacy costs associated with a GESA project, an electrical contract, and anticipated increases in medical expenses associated with the existing population, presuming no change in personnel (i.e. all staff continued employment at another location and did not replace retiring staff or vacant positions at the landing facility). However, as noted above, the number of staff eligible for retirement at SCI Rockview and at the likely landing facilities, as well as the likelihood that reassigned staff will fill vacant positions, will possibly increase savings both in the short and long term. While not a savings, closure of SCI Rockview would also avert approximately \$74M in necessary maintenance in the next five years.

Quehanna Boot Camp's most recent complete fiscal year expenditures (FY22-23) were approximately \$34M, of which, approximately \$29M was allocated to personnel costs. Closure of the facility would potentially offset approximately \$5M in operational costs, minus approximately \$330K in mothballing costs, an electricity contract, and anticipated increases in medical expenses associated with the existing population, presuming no change in personnel (i.e. all staff continued employment at another location and did not replace retiring staff or vacant positions at the landing facility). However, as noted above, the number of staff eligible for retirement at Quehanna Boot Camp and at the likely landing facilities, as well as the likelihood that reassigned staff will fill vacant positions, will possibly increase savings both in the short and long term. While not a savings, closure of Quehanna Boot Camp would also avert approximately \$5.7M in near-term maintenance.

Should the proposal be approved, savings are not anticipated for FY25-26, but potential savings of approximately \$120M are forecast to be realized in FY26-27. The timeline to achieve a full net reduction of the current staffing complements of these facilities is difficult to forecast, without additional information to determine how many employees may retire, how many will replace retiring staff at other locations, and whether (and for how long) some facilities will operate over complement. Should this proposal for closure be accepted, the staffing impacts and personnel saving estimates would further solidify during the pre-announcement analysis period. Therefore, it should be assumed that potential savings may not be immediate but gradually increase over the next several fiscal years as retirements, and replacement of retiring staff, and filling of vacant positions ultimately lead to the full net reduction of the staffing complement.