



November 17, 2025

Chairwomen McNeill and Klunk
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
302 Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202149
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2149
Submitted electronically

Re: Support for HB 144

Dear Chairwomen McNeill and Klunk and Members of the House Children and Youth Committee,

Established in 1986, The Sentencing Project advocates for effective and humane responses to crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults by promoting racial, ethnic, economic, and gender justice.

The Sentencing Project is writing in strong support of HB 144, currently under consideration by the House Children and Youth Committee. HB 144 would expand access to diversion, requiring diversion when a youth is arrested for a first or second-time misdemeanor offense, with some exceptions.

Diversion is more effective and developmentally appropriate than formal court processing. Studies find that youth diverted from the juvenile justice system have a lower likelihood of subsequent arrest, are less likely to be incarcerated, commit less violence, have higher rates of high school completion and college enrollment, and earn higher incomes in adulthood.¹

Passing HB 144 and expanding diversion is better for youth wellbeing and community safety.

We strongly urge you to vote yes on this important legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached at onaugle@sentencingproject.org if you have questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Olivia Naugle
Youth Justice Campaign Strategist

¹ Mendel, R (2022). Diversion: A hidden key to combatting racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile justice. The Sentencing Project