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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Commonwealth Victim Advocate Storm Kicked Off
Lifer Listening Tour

Pennsylvania's Victim Advocate Jennifer Storm met with inmates at SCI Phoenix who have life sentences to hear their issues, concerns and opinions regarding the PA Board of Pardons process and state parole eligibility. The Office of Victim Advocate has been vocally opposed to several pieces of legislation seeking to make all lifers parole eligible at 15 years. Based on OVA's vocal opposition to these bills, the office has been flooded with letters from inmates, many in opposition, and some in support, but *all* with the desire to meet and be heard.

The listening session, which lasted approximately two hours, began as Storm greeted inmates stating "Processes work better when we are all at the table together." Joining Storm was long-time advocate Movita Johnson-Harrell who clearly articulated the goal of listening to all those touched by these potential reforms: "We cannot work on a bill that impacts victims without also talking to the people who work with victims."

The pair was welcomed by lifers who were open with their thoughts and feelings, sharing insights such as "We don't do things to go home. We do things to right our wrongs." Another participant shared his concerns of leaving prison as an elderly man, "I don't want to go out there and be a burden for my family."

"I just want a realistic opportunity for a second chance," another lifer offered.

"It is my obligation to advocate for the families impacted by the crimes committed and our office plans to conduct a fully survey of the close to 5,000 homicide survivors we have registered against the inmates this bill would seek to offer parole eligibility for so we can advocate for their needs." shared Storm at the conclusion of the session.

The listening tour to gain lifer perspectives will continue in January at additional SCI locations across the state.

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