



Hearing: The Impact of Prison Closures in our Communities
Pennsylvania House Republican Caucus
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Greg Scott, President and CEO of the Chamber of Business & Industry of Centre County

Thank you, Chair Rowe, Representative Benninghoff, Representative Kephart, and members of the Committee. My name is Greg Scott, and I am the President and CEO of the Chamber of Business and Industry of Centre County. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today on the impacts of the proposed SCI Rockview closure on Centre County and our neighboring counties.

As the lead economic development organization serving Centre County, CBICC works closely with businesses, policy makers, and community stakeholders to build a robust economy, drive workforce and community development, and ensure our area remains a great place to live and work. To that effect, we recently led a strategic planning process, resulting in Centre County's first Economic Development Strategic Plan in more than 20 years. The plan outlines actions and opportunities for smart economic growth across Centre County. It is my hope that this plan can be used to chart a path forward and make our communities more resilient in the face of potential large-scale changes.

This work is personal to me because I was born and raised in Centre County – I went to Bald Eagle Area High School and Penn State. When I think back on growing up here, there are three landmarks that come to mind: Beaver Stadium, the Nittany Mall, and Rockview. For generations, SCI Rockview has been a pillar of this community and a source of stability – both for families, and the local economy. Like many who grew up around here, I have family and friends who have worked at Rockview or have been involved with the institution in some capacity.

Through hearing their experiences and by attending Representative Paul Takac's community listening sessions and engaging with our County Commissioners, I've come to understand the significance of SCI Rockview on our economy and communities, and how devastating its closure would be.

The proposed closure of SCI Rockview would affect 658 jobs directly. If Quehanna Boot Camp is also closed, that number rises to 892 jobs lost. These are more than just numbers – they represent workers in and around Centre County and their households, families, and livelihoods. Many of these workers have spouses and family members who would also likely leave the area if similar placements are not available at SCI Benner, compounding the loss.

In a letter to the State Department of Corrections, the Centre County Commissioners estimate a \$118 million annual economic impact from Rockview's potential closure. The trickle-down would be immense: over \$50 million in lost wages, nearly \$36 million in spinoff job losses, and \$32 million in lost local purchasing power. Local shops, restaurants, and other small businesses and service providers that rely on Rockview employee spending would lose up to 658 customers, essentially overnight.

Additionally, suppliers that deliver goods to SCI Rockview and contractors and local businesses that help maintain the facility would lose a key client, hitting their bottom line and, potentially, impacting their ability to remain operational and serve our community.

One topic that was repeated consistently across Representative Takac's community listening sessions is about the value generated from within Rockview's walls. The Forestry Unit alone generates \$300,000 in economic activity annually. In addition, SCI Rockview provides meaningful community service across Centre County. Inmates build furniture for state parks and offices, paint churches, build pews, and help maintain public spaces. At a recent listening session in Howard, a Rockview vocational program employee estimated more than 1,000 worker-hours per month are spent supporting municipalities, nonprofits, and community events.

Think of the Centre County Grange Fair – an event that brings in \$21 million over just ten days. This event would not be possible at its current scale without Rockview's support. Inmates work for six-to-seven weeks leading up to the event, largely handling construction and setup. Without their labor, much of that responsibility would fall to volunteers who may lack the time, equipment, and resources to fill that gap.

Centre County has already endured the loss of major manufacturing employers in the region. We can't afford another massive loss like the Corning factory closure – especially when Centre County is projected to grow by nearly 20,000 residents by 2050.

There's also the question of what comes next in the event of closure. In the past, facilities across the state have remained unused, incurring costs for the state without a clear plan for redevelopment or disposal. I hope that, if the state decides to close a portion of or the entire SCI Rockview facility, a transparent and well-developed plan is communicated to ensure we are able to coordinate our efforts to maximize economic potential of the site and make it work for our communities.

Finally, I want to echo a critical point made by our County Commissioners: The state's projection of \$120 million in savings from closing Rockview and Quehanna may be misleading. It seems possible that many of the capital improvements used to justify closure have already been completed or are underway. If these costs have already been accounted for, the long-term consequences of closure may outweigh any short-term savings.

Additionally, the ripple effect across the entire Department of Corrections will be significant, from workforce disruptions, staffing shortages, and increased overtime, to a loss of morale among employees who consistently describe Rockview as a high-quality, team-oriented workplace.

Ultimately, the proposal to close Rockview and the Boot Camp will greatly impact Centre, Clearfield, and Clinton Counties and the people who live and work here, many of whom have contributed to our local economy and communities for generations.

Thank you again for your time today. I hope my remarks have proven helpful in understanding the immense, complex economic and community impact the closure of SCI Rockview would have. As a longtime member of the Centre County community, and the leader of the county's economic development organization, I thank you for your attention to this issue and advocacy on our community's behalf.