The Economic Impact of Pardons: Evaluating a Decade of Data in Pennsylvania

Presented by:
Before We Begin

- Please “mute” your microphone
- Use the “Q&A” feature to type your questions for moderators and panelists in real time
- Be respectful
Today’s Agenda

• Welcoming Remarks from Keith Leaphart, The Lenfest Foundation

• Brief Presentation of Economy League Research – *Pardons as an Economic Investment Strategy: Evaluating a Decade of Data in Pennsylvania*

• Conversation with Esteemed Panel of Experts

• Audience Q & A

• Closing Remarks, The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia
A Criminal Record Has Collateral Consequences

- Prohibited from living in public housing
- Losing access to public benefits
- Prohibited by law from working in several industries
- Denied state licenses for not having the requisite “good moral character”

The formal and informal barriers created by a criminal record expand an individual’s punishment well beyond the criminal justice system.
Collateral Consequences Impact Thousands of Individuals Across the Commonwealth

84,794 PENNSYLVANIANS ARE INCARCERATED

296,219 ARE ON PROBATION OR PAROLE

Source: The Sentencing Project, 2016
Relief from those Collateral Consequences Includes Pardons

- **Pardons** provide relief from “the consequences, generally in the nature of legal disabilities, resulting from conviction for a crime."

- A pardon "**allows a job applicant to deny he was ever convicted without worry of any sanction.**" -PA Board of Pardons (BOP)

---

**Executive clemency** - the power of a President in federal criminal cases, and the Governor in state convictions, to pardon a person convicted of a crime, commute the sentence (shorten it, often to time already served) or reduce it from death to another lesser sentence.
From Individual Relief to Community-Level Economic Growth

1. Historically, who has taken advantage of pardons in Pennsylvania?

2. How have pardons helped Pennsylvanians with criminal records improve their circumstances?

3. Given the high overlap between criminal records and poverty, what impacts have pardons had on communities?

The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia embarked on a quantitative analysis to examine the economic impact of pardons on low-income, high-arrest communities in Pennsylvania.
Key Components of our report: “Pardons as an Economic Investment Strategy”

• Assessment of pardons that have been granted in Pennsylvania

• Assessment of pardons’ economic impact, particularly in high-arrest, low-income communities

• Proposal of three policy and practice recommendations to expand the use and impact of pardons as a workforce and economic development tool
Assessment of pardons that have been granted in Pennsylvania
Finding #1: Between 2008-2017 the average pardons process took upwards of three years from filing to final decision

- **3.17 years** from the date of filing to any outcome.
- **3.68 years** from the date of filing to granted.
Finding #2: The average pardon grant rate during this ten-year period was **38.2%**, and has been **54% from 2015-2017**
Finding #3: In 2017, pardon grant rates were consistent across racial groups.
Assessment of pardons’ economic impact, particularly in high-arrest, low-income communities
A Note on Data

To identify high-arrest counties:
Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Reporting System

To identify the low-income zip codes within these counties:
2017 ACS 5-year estimates

High Arrest Counties (H.A.C.):
1. Allegheny
2. Bradford
3. Dauphin
4. Lycoming
5. Philadelphia
Finding #1: The rate of granted pardons in high-arrest counties falls below the statewide average.

- **Non-H.A.C. County Residents - Average Grant Rate, 40%**
  - 2008: 33%
  - 2009: 27%
  - 2010: 28%
  - 2011: 32%
  - 2012: 38%
  - 2013: 40%
  - 2014: 52%
  - 2015: 58%
  - 2016: 63%
  - 2017: 57%

- **H.A.C. County Residents - Average Grant Rate, 34%**
  - 2008: 23%
  - 2009: 23%
  - 2010: 23%
  - 2011: 32%
  - 2012: 32%
  - 2013: 38%
  - 2014: 53%
  - 2015: 48%
  - 2016: 50%
  - 2017: 48%
Finding #2: Pardon grant rates differ by community income level

Low Income: 30%
Middle Income: 40%
High Income: 40%
Finding #3: Pardons filed between 2008 and 2018 and ultimately granted allowed recipients to earn an estimated $16 million in additional wages as of December 2019.

“SERVING TIME REDUCES […] ANNUAL EARNINGS BY 40%.”
SOURCE: PEW RESEARCH CENTERS

“THOSE WHO OBTAIN EXPUNGEMENT EXPERIENCE […] ON AVERAGE, WITHIN TWO YEARS, WAGES GO UP BY 25% VERSUS THE PRE-EXPUNGEMENT TRAJECTORY.”
SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, PRESCOTT AND STARR
Policy and Practice Options to Expand the Impact of Pardons
Policy Option #1: Increasing the number of pardon applicants

Key Finding: If the number of applicants in Philadelphia County from 2008 to present doubled, earnings could have increased by $92,828
Policy Option #2: Increasing the share of applications that are granted pardons

Key Finding: If residents of low-income, high-arrest communities received pardons at the state-wide rate from 2008-2015, earnings could have increased by $440,433.57
Policy Option #3: Shortening the processing time

**Key Finding:** If the processing time were reduced by 25%, those who received pardons over the past 10 years could have generated $6.9 million in additional income.
Moderated Panel with Esteemed Experts
Earl Buford  
CEO, Partner for Work

John Fetterman  
Lieutenant Governor  
Commonwealth of PA

Ryan Allen Hancock  
Of Counsel, Willig, Williams & Davidson; Co-Founder  
Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity

Dr. Nikia Owens  
Managing Director, Financial Empowerment, United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New