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Senator Liane Sorenson Recognized for Regional Leadership on Criminal Justice Issues

Senator Liane Sorenson (Delaware), First Vice-Chair of the Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference (CSG/ERC) Criminal Justice Board of Directors, recently testified before the Massachusetts State Legislature on Delaware's bipartisan efforts to manage the growth of its prison population.

On Tuesday, November 22, Senator Sorenson testified during a packed joint hearing of the Massachusetts house and senate judiciary committees. Additional witnesses included the lieutenant governor, the mayor of Boston, and the secretary of public safety, among others. Senator Sorenson spoke about Delaware's experience working across party lines to make better use of limited prison space by ensuring that sentences for drug offenses are proportional to sentences for other types of crime. "In Delaware," Senator Sorenson testified, "legislators took a significant step forward by forging bipartisan consensus about how best to curb the growth of our prison population while protecting victims and safeguarding communities, but we still have work ahead of us."

Senator Sorenson has served on CSG/ERC's Criminal Justice Board of Directors for more than four years, and was recently appointed as First Vice-Chair, after serving previously as the Board's Second Vice-Chair. Members of the Board include legislative leaders, state corrections directors, juvenile justice policymakers, leading judges, prosecutors, and others from 10 northeastern states. The Board announced Senator Sorenson's appointment at its first full meeting of the year, held November 11 and 12 in New York City.

Massachusetts lawmakers are considering legislation that would permit individuals sentenced to mandatory sentences for drug offenses to be considered for parole after serving two-thirds of their sentence. A number of states, including Delaware, Colorado, Maine, and Michigan, have revisited their mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenders, in an effort to ensure adequate prison space for serious and violent offenders.

Representative Mike Festa (MA), Chair of CSG/ERC's Criminal Justice Board and a co-sponsor of the legislation under consideration, spoke highly of his fellow

officer: “Senator Sorenson has been a key leader in Delaware on crime policy and other public safety issues. During her tenure in the legislature, she has sponsored key legislation in the areas of domestic violence, health, and criminal sentencing reform. In particular, legislators from around our region turn to Senator Sorenson for her expertise on victims’ issues.”

The CSG/ERC Criminal Justice Board directs national projects that address pressing criminal justice issues, including the overrepresentation of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system, the growing numbers of people released from prison and jail each year, services and rights provided to crime victims, and justice reinvestment strategies. States across the country have used the bipartisan recommendations developed by the Board to create legislative initiatives, and Congress has worked closely with Board leaders to shape national policy around these issues.

Senator Sorenson has served as State Senator for the 6th District for the past eleven years, following two years as a State Representative.

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The Council of State Governments is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership association for elected and appointed state government officials. Funded largely through state government dues, it is the only state government group serving policymakers from the legislative, judicial, and executive branches.

***PHOTO ATTACHED:**

(left to right) Delaware State Senator Liane M. Sorenson, new Vice Chair of the CSG/ERC Criminal Justice Board, is pictured with New York Assemblyman Jeffrion Aubrey, Immediate Past Chair, and Massachusetts Representative Michael Festa, the current Chair.