



Middlesex Sheriff's Office

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SHERIFF KOUTOUJIAN ATTENDS CRIMINAL JUSTICE PANEL HOSTED BY CAMBRIDGE CITY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE

September 15th, 2011

On Wednesday, September 14, 2011 Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian participated on a panel in Cambridge discussing criminal justice reform. The forum was hosted by the Cambridge City Democratic Committee and was held at the Cambridge YWCA.

On the panel with Sheriff Koutoujian were: Mike Coelho, Assistant Secretary for Policy at the Executive Office of Public Safety; Anthony Irving, former Department of Corrections inmate and community advocate; Richard Harding, Cambridge School Committee member and director of the Men of Color Health Initiative in Cambridge; and Helen Credle, former Assistance Commissioner for the Department of Corrections.

The panel's discussion focused on effective programming for people who are currently incarcerated and ways for the community to better help the process of rehabilitation and reentry. The panel examined the importance of criminal justice reform and the need to identify areas in which we can reduce recidivism and break the cycle of criminal behavior. All panelists agreed on the need for providing educational, vocational and rehabilitation opportunities to inmates and former inmates both behind the walls and when released.

"We have an opportunity to affect change behind the walls," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "Inmate programming is the hammer that can break the cycle of criminal behavior. It costs roughly \$40,000 a year to house an inmate. If we provide the right skills and the right rehabilitation services we can prevent an individual from making the wrong choices once released, and save taxpayer dollars in the process."

Since taking office in January, Sheriff Koutoujian has implemented several innovative, new inmate programs to better prepare inmates for reentry into society. For example, a vocational program to teach print shop skills and another to certify in janitorial services. Studies show that recidivism could be cut in half with effective programming.

Attached Photo (L to R): Mike Coelho, Tony Irving, Helen Credle, Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian

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