



Connecticut Correction Employees

AFSCME LOCAL 1565

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Raised Bill No. 5540 An Act Concerning Staffing Standards of the Department of Correction

March 13, 2006

My Name is Robert Katz. I am a correction officer and an Executive Board Member of Connecticut Correctional Employees, AFSCME Local 1565. I am asking that you support Raised Bill No. 5540 as this legislation is important not only to the front line staff in the department but to the public they are sworn to protect.

Previously Commissioner Theresa Lantz and her staff have testified in front of the Legislature that the staffing formula used by the department is the one that is endorsed by the American Correctional Association. After testifying, the formula used by the department, was changed by Commissioner Lantz. This has had a multi tiered effect on the department and the staff working in the correctional facilities.

The formula that is now used has decreased the numbers of staff that are necessary at each correctional facility. While the number of positions (posts) at each institution has remained the same all the current formula does is reduce the number of officers available to fill each post. This requires that officers work either voluntary or mandatory overtime to fill the vacant posts left by the decreased number of officers. We all know that a person who is working 16 hour shifts on a regular basis rather than the standard eight hour shift will be less alert and effective. This has caused the security in the correctional facilities to be compromised. Further, when the numbers of staff are not sufficient to fill all the vacancies that have been left due to the staffing shortages caused through the current staffing calculations, facilities are required to shut down posts. This means that posts that are critical to the operations of a correctional facility are not manned, either for a portion of a shift or even for entire shifts. This further compromises the safety and security of our correctional facilities.

Commissioner Lantz and her administration have been criticizing correctional staff for their use of their accrued sick time. But the changes that she and her administration have made in the calculations for staffing the facilities have created this problem. Officers that regularly have to work the 16 hour shifts due the short staffing are more likely to become ill from lack of proper rest, or are more likely to be injured on the job and be out of work on worker's compensation. If sufficient staff was assigned to each facility and staff "burn out" reduced, these numbers which Commissioner Lantz criticizes her staff with could be reduced.

This bill is not only important to the approximately 5,000 front line staff in the Department of Correction, but also to the citizens of Connecticut who work each day and sleep each night under the blanket of protection that the correctional staff in each institution provide.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert Katz

Executive Board Member
AFSCME Local 1565

In the public service . . .

