

Judiciary Committee Testimony
March 13, 2006
BILL 5540

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and distinguished committee members. My name is Jon Pepe, President of the Connecticut State Prison Employees Union AFSCME Local 391. I represent 1800 members in the Enfield, Somers and Suffield Communities. I also have served 15 years as a Correction Officer and continue serving the State in this position.

I am submitting to you today written testimony in favor of BILL 5540 an act concerning staffing of the Connecticut Department of Correction. BILL 5540 would return the proper formula to determine staffing of the Connecticut Department of Correction. This formula, designated as the Shift Relief Factor, has been used by the Connecticut Department of Corrections for as long as I have been employed until January 01, 2004. This formula is approved by the National Institute of Correction, based here in Connecticut, and was trumpeted in your committee by Commissioner Theresa Lantz in September 2003, three month prior to her eliminating it without any viable reasoning.

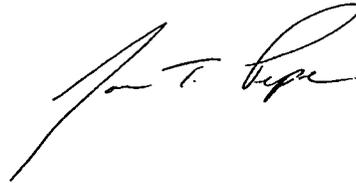
The Shift Relief Factor is used in Prisons, Sheriff and Police Departments throughout the United States. Extensive studies by these other States and by the National Institute of Correction has determined this is the most cost effective and safest way to staff 24 hour/seven days a week hazardous duty operations. Not using this formula results in not accounting for average sick time usage, military leave, vacations, training, workers compensation, jury duty, and other daily post vacancy reasons. Not using this formula is irresponsible and results in excessive overtime at an enormous cost to the State of Connecticut and on the Correction Officers themselves.

Most posts inside the Prison walls consist of touring a housing unit with 70-100 inmates every 15 minutes, conducting recreation, visits, showers, phone calls commissary, etc. When a Correction Officer works 16 hours a day on a continuous basis, voluntarily or involuntarily, the stress and physical expense is unhealthy for them, their families and the citizens of Connecticut.

We are not looking for 700 new Correction Officers to be hired, we are looking to have staffing needs accurately reflected and the rate of hires to at least keep up with attrition and the high number of Military call-ups and I believe BILL 5540 will do this.

Going back to the staffing formula used for over a decade by the Connecticut Department of Correction is the smart thing to do and I commend all those involved in drafting this BILL and this committee for addressing this very important issue.

Thank you for your time, unfortunately I had a prior commitment or I would have appeared in front of the committee to answer any questions you may have had. I am always available should you have any questions in the future. Thank You.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon T. Pepe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Jon T. Pepe