



Office of the Mayor

City of New Haven

165 Church Street
New Haven, CT 06510

John DeStefano, Jr.
Mayor

Testimony to the Judiciary Committee From the City of New Haven

The City of New Haven supports the thrust of HB 5651, which calls for the adoption for the recommendations made by the Commission of Prison and Jail Overcrowding. These recommendations seek to reduce the rate of recidivism among offenders of drug related and sexual assault crimes by increasing the amount of pre-release planning, increasing probation officers in the community, mental health and substance abuse treatment, among other things.

Our experience in the City of New Haven has seen drastic impact in public safety by the amount of ex-offenders released into the community and the limited resources that are in place to adequately transition them into the community. The City of New Haven Police Department conducted a study during a five month period between May and October of 2004 which detailed the patterns of ex-offenders be released into the community and what affected their rates of recidivism.

During this time period in 2004, the Connecticut Department of Corrections released approximately four thousand three hundred and ninety-nine (4,399) inmates across sixty three (63) cities in the State of Connecticut during this period studied. The City of New Haven is the second largest recipient of the released inmates in Connecticut for a total of five hundred and thirty-one (531) which accounts for twelve percent (12%) of the total inmates released in Connecticut. The City of Hartford is the only city that exceeds New Haven in the number of inmates released with a total of six hundred and forty-four (644) or fifteen percent (15%) of the total number of inmates released in Connecticut. The City of Bridgeport is the third largest recipient for a total of three hundred and sixty-two (362) or eight percent (8%) of the total number of inmates released in Connecticut.

In New Haven, the crimes that were adjudicated that received the majority of incarcerations were the sale of a hallucigen/narcotics (14%) with associated

conspiracy cases (5%) that totaled 19%, possession of narcotics (11%), larcenies (7%), assaults (5%), various misdemeanors² (5%), robberies (4%), weapon violations (4%) and burglaries. Conviction of other crimes included Motor Vehicle Violations (15), Sexual Assaults (12), Criminal Attempts³ (11), Interfering with Police (9), Risk of Injury (8), Failure to Appear (8), Motor Vehicle Violations Involving Influence Of... (6), Assault on Police Officer (5), Manslaughter (4), Unlawful Restraint (4), Violations of Protective/Restraining Orders (4), Youthful Offender (4), Escape (3), Prostitution (2), Reckless Endangerment (2), Possession of Child Pornography (1) and Cruelty to Animals (1).

In New Haven we saw particularly high incidences within a short period of time after release of ex-offenders for crimes involving gun violence. There were a total of ten (10) homicide suspects that were released from a correctional facility prior to committing the 2004 homicides. One (1) of these suspects was released from a New York City Correctional Facility and the date of his release is unknown at the time of this writing. However, of the nine (9) known release dates of those inmates released from a Connecticut Correctional Facility, one (1) suspect committed a homicide fifteen (15) days upon reentry to the New Haven community, followed by five (5) suspects that committed a homicide within one (1) to six (6) months, one (1) suspect that committed a homicide within nine (9) months and two (2) suspects that committed a homicide within fifteen (15) months upon release from a Connecticut Correctional Facility. It is also true for the victims of gun violence. The thirteen (13) homicide victims, six (6) or forty-six percent (46%) follow a pattern of having prior criminal histories. Three (3) or twenty-three percent (23%) are convicted felons and have been convicted of crimes stemming from weapon violations, assaults, sale of hallucigen/narcotics, possession of narcotics and burglary. Moreover, all three (3) of these convicted felons that were homicide victims had served two (2) or more prison terms in Connecticut prior to the homicide incident.

There are a number of reasons as why there is such a high rate of recidivism and criminal after release into the community. One example is that among those released back into New Haven where homeless, 86% re-entered the criminal justice system. Many of the recommendations from the Commission will help address homelessness by increasing the amount of job training, mental health services and substance abuse counseling. The lack of is indicated in many patterns of homelessness.

Increased discharge planning and post-release follow-up by adding staffing could dramatically reduce the amount of crime by ex-offenders. In New Haven alone the case load for a probation officers is staggering, 42 probation officers for 5,570 ex-offenders of probation.

We strongly urge the appropriation of funding as specified by the commission report. Cities like New Haven have made public safety a commitment, but policing does not address some of the issues that affect ex-offenders.