

**Bill #6958 - An Act Extending Hazardous Duty Retirement
Benefits to Clerical Workers at Correctional Institutions**

Good afternoon members of this Committee. My name is **Lori Hadziutko**. I am a Secretary who has worked in Connecticut's prisons for the past 16 years. Because my job title is classified as Clerical, I am not offered the same retirement benefits as all other Department of Correction employees.

Like all Correctional Employees, by just entering a prison environment, we are risking our health and safety and subjected to being assaulted, injured, taken hostage, and exposed to disease, stress, and violence. Do you know how terrifying it is to be threatened to be raped and killed by an inmate? I do.

Do you know how hard it is to remain professional when an inmate makes grotesque and offensive sexual gestures at the sight of you, and you cannot leave the area? I do.

What would you do if you saw an inmate stabbing another in the face? Would you hesitate? I didn't.

I can't describe the fear that I felt, when I wrote up an inmate for gang activity and I was instructed by many staff members to drop the paperwork for fear of retaliation on me at both work and home.

When an incident happens in our area, we don't take a roster of our benefit package, we respond, just like our peers. For example, when an inmate fight erupted in a school classroom, I protected my pregnant co-worker from injury by shielding her with my body and intervening to stop the fight. I did not stop to think about the fact that she receives Hazardous Duty benefits and I don't. I reacted as trained. We are all members of the same team, so why are we compensated differently?

Clericals are primary responders on the facilities' emergency plans, and are informed that in the event of an emergency in our area, we will be locked in, just like anyone else. In an institutional emergency, the situation is contained to the smallest possible area. If we happen to be in that area just like hazardous duty employees, our safety will be sacrificed.

Over the years, we have responded to codes, operated inmate housing units, assisted in shakedowns, discovered shanks, handled contraband and evidence resulting from riots, disturbances, fights, gang-related incidents, fires, inmate escapes, bomb threats, and anthrax threats, just to name a few.

One day while I was assisting with an inmate housing unit shakedown by running the Officers' station, a fight broke out that took a group of staff members and several deployments of CAP-STUN (law enforcement grade mace) to control the situation. My participation in containing this emergency response resulted in my suffering a strained chest wall that required emergency medical treatment.

My intention in sharing these experiences is to emphasize that Correctional Clericals are dedicated professional individuals held to equal performance standards, without equal benefits.

Correctional Clericals represent far less than 3% of the Department of Correction's total workforce. Therefore, an accurate fiscal analysis will show that inclusion of Correctional Clericals in the Hazardous Duty Retirement Benefit package will not create a significant financial burden for the State of Connecticut or the Department of Correction. It is merely extending equal benefits to a small group of individuals who should have been receiving them all along. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted by: **Lori Hadziutko**
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