

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 5, 2007

Testimony of Brian K. Murphy, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Correction
H.B. 7285, AAC Carrying Handguns by Employees of the Department of Correction

Good Afternoon, I'm Brian Murphy, Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Correction. I am here on behalf of Commissioner Lantz to support the general intent of H.B. 7285, AAC Carrying Handguns by Employees of the Department of Correction. This bill would explicitly grant authority to certain Department of Correction staff to carry handguns in the performance of their official duties without the need for a Connecticut pistol permit. Although the Commissioner of Correction has implied authority through Sec. 53a-3, subsection 9, Sec. 53a-18, subsection 2 and 53a-22(c) of the Connecticut General Statutes to grant such authority, we are in agreement with our correctional officers' union that explicit language that clarifies this authority will further protect both the agency and our staff, and would serve the public interest.

There are however a few areas of this bill that we have a concern over. We oppose the recommended changes to Sec. 1(b)(1) where it looks to delete the reference to parole officer. By doing this, it would diminish the present authority of parole officers to carry firearms while off duty and to and from work without a Connecticut pistol permit. This diminished authority would severely hinder their ability to be responsive to issues that may arise while off duty and jeopardize their personal safety given the nature of their clientele. In addition, it would leave Connecticut parole officers under this section with less authority than parole officers of any other state while engaged in the pursuit of official duties.

Secondly, Sec.1(b)(E) of the bill should be amended as follows "or (E) any employee of the Department of Correction so authorized by the Commissioner of Correction, while engaged in community supervision of inmates or parolees, transportation of inmates outside of correctional institutions, perimeter patrol of a correctional facility or

[activation or training of] emergency response personnel engaged in the pursuit of, or training for, their official duties, ...

Finally we would like to add language that makes this authority subject to explicit approval from the Commissioner of Correction.

While we have already discussed some of our concerns with the proponents of the bill, I am sure that we can collaborate with them on drafting some changes to this bill that will ensure public safety as well as provide the appropriate authority and safety for our staff.

I appreciate your time and would be happy to address any questions you may have.