

**Testimony in support of HB7407: AN ACT CONCERNING CITIZEN  
OVERSIGHT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION**

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing  
April 4, 2007

I, William H. Barrett, a former inmate of several Connecticut's prisons by way of standard transference, will respectfully address some of the major injustices that I experienced and observed.

One of the primary problems is the inadequacies of the law library. Usually, these libraries are a combination of poorly updated law books and regular books-novels, history, art and other books that are not related to law. Obviously, this is not your standard type of law library, more of a makeshift. What does an inmate do when he chooses to do his own legal research? One could say that there are outside sources. But, that is usually a rare situation. Often, a lawyer is virtually no lawyer or of no true assistance. The client's interest is not respected. Often an attorney for an inmate turns out to be a virtual second prosecutor. I speak from empirical wisdom. When last I checked, legal correspondences only addressed civil matters. Inmates' issues are usually of the criminal type, not civil.

There is no doubt that a citizen oversight commission is needed that is independent of the Department of Correction. I clearly observed this fact- this need. I was a mentor during my incarceration. I assisted many inmates in addressing legal matters, as well as personal rights as it pertained to prison rights in general. An inmate who helps another inmate in preparing legal work is in violation-rule infraction. But, if I had not been in violation, several inmates would have been unfairly violated. I saw no recourse. They saw no recourse. Many of these inmates have poor to extremely poor literary skills. Many have mental inadequacies. This segment of the population has a hurdle before it in understanding and articulating these legal rights in most phases of prison life that far exceeds others. This is a gross injustice.

An inmate should not have his guaranteed "equal protection" under the law stripped from him by virtue of the fact that he is an inmate. That "equal protection" right should and must be respected. An independent citizen commission is the first humane step to secure this objective.

William Barrett  
(203) 562-0328  
1035 Winchester Ave  
Hamden, CT 06517