

Council 4 AFSCME is supportive of:

**Raised Bill 668, AAC Prison Overcrowding
Committee Bill 5096, AA Increasing the Number of Correction
Officer**

**Raised Bill 5858, AAC Minimum Staffing Levels of the
Department of Correction**

Good afternoon, Chairman Lawlor, Chairman McDonald and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is David Moffa. I am president of AFSCME Correction Local 387. I am joined by Jon Pepe, the president of Local 391, and Luke Leone, president of Local 1565.

We urge you to increase the number of correction officer posts and parole officers on the job. We urge you to at the very least keep the 125 correction officer and 22 parole officer positions in Governor Rell's proposed budget. Our understanding is that most of the correction officer positions are already filled. Several were added to man the new dorms at the Carl Robinson correction facility.

Even with the addition of these positions the correction system remains seriously understaffed. I submit to you a report prepared by the legislature's nonpartisan Program Review and Investigations Committee staff. This report, completed in

December of 2003, found that front line correction positions are more than 20%, or 700 officers, understaffed. I assure you that staffing has not gotten any better since this report was written. In fact, the major step that the administration seems to have taken as a result of this report is to dilute the "shift relief" factor, or staffing formula, to make it appear on paper as though we are better staffed.

Prison overcrowding is inherently dangerous. We ask for your help in alleviating it. It was detailed on a recent legislative tour of the Willard/Cybulski facility, that there are up to 30 inmates assigned to one toilet. A tour of the New Haven Correctional Center revealed that there are inmates crammed into areas that should be used for teaching and recreation. Hygiene suffers. There is a danger of spreading diseases such as the MRSA virus and drug resistant tuberculosis, both of which have been found in state correctional facilities. Overcrowding increases tension between inmates and staff.

There was a serious fight at the Carl Robinson facility a few months ago. This facility was the site of serious rioting in the early 1990s, resulting in the killing of two inmates, injuries to many officers and millions of dollars of damage to state property.

Within the last six weeks, there have been a number of assaults on staff, most recently at Northern, Osborn and Enfield. We agree with the recent Hartford Courant editorial urging that the empty north block of the Cheshire correctional facility (374 beds) be used to house inmates to immediately alleviate overcrowding.

Our union also urges your help in tending to the large number of inmates with mental illness. We urge that steps be taken to meet the treatment needs of these inmates, as well as the needs of correction staff that have to deal with them.

We also believe that 13 of the parole officer positions added in the budget are already filled. Parole officers have a very demanding job in trying to integrate inmates back into society and prevent them from reoffending. These officers have more cases than they can adequately handle.

Our members take their duty to Connecticut's citizens very seriously. They strive to make our correctional facilities and our communities as safe as possible. We appreciate your concern in doing the same. I would be happy to answer any questions.

