



*Office of Chief Public Defender
State of Connecticut*

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**TESTIMONY OF
SUSAN O. STOREY, CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER**

RAISED BILL NO. 641, AN ACT CONCERNING REPEAT VIOLENT OFFENDERS
**RAISED BILL NO. 5035, AN ACT CONCERNING REPEAT VIOLENT OFFENDERS,
BURGLARY, AND PARDONS AND PAROLE**
**RAISED BILL NO. 5876, AN ACT CONCERNING MANDATORY LIFE SENTENCES FOR
REPEAT VIOLENT OFFENDERS**
**RAISED BILL NO. 5915, AN ACT CONCERNING PERSISTENT DANGEROUS FELONY
OFFENDERS**

**JUDICIARY COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
March 12, 2008**

The Office of Chief Public Defender opposes the imposition of life sentences without the possibility of release as provided in the above four bills. This Legislature passed **P.A. 08-1, *An Act Concerning Criminal Justice Reforms*** in the Special Session which already provides for increased mandatory minimums, more streamlined prosecution, and limited judicial discretion in sentencing repeat violent offenders.

The PEW Center on the States recently released shocking statistics in their 2008 report entitled, "***One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008***". The Center found that the United States incarcerates more people than any other country in the world, including China which is far more populous. The total incarcerated population is noted as 2.3 million in the United States and in China, 1.5 million.

The statistics in the PEW report are even more stunning when incarceration rates are analyzed by race, age, and gender. The study's findings were:

- One in every 53 people in their 20's is behind bars
- Black men 18 or older -1 in 15
- Hispanic men 18 or older -1 in 36
- Black men 20-34 years old -1 in 9
- Black males over 55 years old -1 in 115
- Persons over 55 years old -1 in 837

The report made clear that it is the states' policy choices that primarily drive prison growth – not an increase in crime. Legislative proposals that incarcerate people for longer periods of time and some for their natural life will incur enormous costs and collateral consequences, both economic and human, with no proven positive impact on public safety. Furthermore, there is no good evidence to show that more punitive prison reforms reduce recidivism or the overall crime rate. The expansion of incarceration to such an extent necessarily causes financial burden on the state and inevitably reduces funding for community initiatives and proven prevention measures such as access to quality education and health care. In fact, Connecticut now ranks fourth out of five states, including Vermont, Michigan, Oregon, and Delaware, that spend as much or more on corrections than on higher education.

Recent news articles regarding states with Three –Strikes laws indicate some of the problems with Three-Strikes legislation. California is besieged with overwhelming costs of incarceration such as:

- New prison construction at a cost of \$222,000 per bed
- Overtime costs for DOC staff - 24/7 inmate supervision and care
- Medical, dental, and mental health care costs:
 - Federal oversight of inmate medical care
 - Geriatric prisoner care- Age decreases criminal activity but dramatically increases expenses in a prison setting:
 - Alzheimer's, cancer, heart and liver disease, diabetes-higher rate in elderly inmates
- Reduced reentry resources
- 70% Recidivism rate

The Office of Chief Public Defender requests that the Legislature refrain from passing any more punitive measures than already passed in the recent Special Session in order to gauge the impact of those laws on Connecticut's citizens and the state budget.