Appropriations/Judiciary Joint Committees
Informational Forum on Prison Crowding Costs

April 10, 2008

Testimony of
Theresa C. Lantz, Commissioner
Department of Correction

Good Afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Merrill and members of the Appropriations Committee, and Senator McDonald and Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Theresa Lantz, Commissioner of the Department of Correction, and joining me here today are members of my executive team to respond to any questions.

Let me begin by acknowledging the obvious, that my agency has been confronted with a very challenging Fiscal Year 2008. However, the professional staff of the Connecticut Department of Correction has, and continues to, safely and successfully respond to those challenges.

Our state's entire criminal justice system continues to be engaged in a period of intensive reflection, review and revision since the tragic events last summer. With the prudent leadership of Governor Rell, and leaders of the legislative and judicial branches, the effect of the efforts will be an enhancement of our state's public safety.

As you know, my agency has experienced record growth in the incarcerated population over the past several months. As has been effective in the past years when we gradually experienced unprecedented decreases in the overall population, we have been working closely with our partners in the public and non-profit areas to focus attention and resources on appropriate offenders who can be transitioned into the community in a very

measured, deliberate and methodical manner. It is with pride I am able to report to you, that due to the vigilance and dedication of my staff, even this period of increased inmate population has transpired without a major incident impacting the safety of our communities.

We conducted a thorough review of our Department's infrastructure to identify additional areas in which the increased inmate population may be confined. This review was undertaken with strict adherence to safety, security, classification, and appropriate staffing levels. As is necessary, we have reopened housing areas that were closed, and we continue to utilize, as we have in the past, non-traditional areas to confine inmates around the system. I am pleased to report that since January, we have seen a gradual decrease in our incarcerated population as we fully engage the additional resources that were provided by the Governor and the Legislature. We are also working collaboratively with our partners in other state agencies that are testifying before you today, as well as our non-profit providers of services.

Our financial situation this year reflects the impact of the higher inmate population, as it was necessary to provide appropriate staffing for expanded operations. The additional posts required have impacted our overtime costs by an estimate of $3.4 million, the same shortfall as reported in November 2007.

Our projected Other Expenses deficiency status this year is $7.6 million and reflects the impact on inmate board and care expenses in the areas of food, clothing and living quarter supplies. Inflation continues to play a large role as well, in the costs of both services and commodities. Please be assured that my staff and I work continually to

achieve an appropriate balance between fiscal prudence and maintaining a safe, secure and humane environment for offenders.

In the Community Support Services account, our projected deficiency is $1 million, as we continue to move forward in this area, seeking further expansion of halfway house beds.

Finally, the University of Connecticut Health Center Correctional Managed Health Care (CMHC) anticipates an operating deficiency of $6.5 million in the delivery of Inmate Medical Services. The major component of this projection is the continuation of expenses that created a deficiency last fiscal year of $3.4 million, combined with recognition of a $2 million subsidy from John Dempsey Medical Center, $100,000 to expand Mental Health housing for women, and the $1 million impact of our increased inmate population.

My staff and I will continue to seek cost savings throughout our operations. As always, please be assured that public safety and the efficient and effective management of resources are priorities of my administration.

Succinct responses to other questions that were recently posed to my agency are attached. If you wish me to provide further documentation or elaboration on any responses, I will be happy to do so. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today, and I (we) would be happy to answer your questions.

Legislative Prison Overcrowding Costs Forum
Connecticut Department of Correction
Responses to Inquiries
Thursday, April 10, 2008

1) Delineate any operational cost for expansion

The Department's overall deficiency is $18.5 million.

- Increase of 700 inmates over FY 07 average- $3.4-million Personal Services, $2.5-million Other expenses, $1-million inmate medical, $1-million Community Support Services.
- Expanded GPS for Burglary 1 and 2- $251,000
- CRCI Quad retrofit, 48 Correction Officers and 18 support staff- $3.5-million in FY08,
- Governor's Public Safety Enhancements- 13 parole officers, 3 correctional counselors, 50 correction officers, added halfway house and non residential services for non-violent offenders- $2-milllion for FY 08
- Public Act 08-01, as enacted, - nine parole officers, 300 GPS, five fulltime board members, one psychologist, video conferencing, 108 re-entry beds (35 in FY 08), 12 sex offender beds, re-entry furlough eliminated, Burglary 1 and 2 switched to 85% level- $1,275.943 for FY 08- $6.5-million for FY 09

Total $9.5million in FY08

2) List the number of cases that are assigned to each parole officer

Parole and Community Services Organization and Staffing:

* 5 District Offices (Htfd, NH, Bpt, Wtby and Norwich) with Statewide Residential Unit
* Specialized Units (Fugitive, MH, SMU and Central Intake)
* Caseloads:

64 General Caseload Officers now carry avg. 48 (target is 55-60)
13 Specialized Officers now carry avg. 19 (target is 25-30)
13 Officers oversee residential network
8 Officers assigned to Fugitive Team (no caseload)
5 Temp assigned to BOPP
8 Release Coordinators
111 Total (plus 3 vacancies-1 Retirement, 2 Ext Work Comp)

3) **List the types of employment programs offered to inmates who are incarcerated and to ex-offenders who are being released**

- Six, and soon a seventh, facilities offer job centers which link offenders with the Department of Labor Job Bank
- DOC has recently hired a job developer who will work to increase access to employer for released offenders.
- Unified School District #1(USD #1) has 55 vocation training programs in 24 different content areas.
- Inmates can earn their GED to enhance their employability
- USD #1 has a 21 day re-entry class that includes completing job applications, resume writing, cover letters, mock interviews including answering the felony question.
- Resource/Career Fairs are conducted at nine facilities each year.
- DOC contracts with a number of agencies and programs that provide released offenders with employment services: OIC- New London, CPA Employment - Hartford, New Opportunities Jobs Now- Waterbury, CSI- New London, FIC Fathers Works.
- DOC contracted halfway houses work with offenders to find and maintain employment.

4) **How are sex offenders introduced to employment opportunities post-release?**

- While incarcerated, general population sex offenders are eligible to participate in the same programs listed above. In the community, sex offenders are referred to the same network on non-residential service providers, as are all offenders in the community.

-The prison overcrowding has reduced the space allocated for education, counseling, and other mental health interventions. How are they being addressed, currently?

- The infringement into these areas has been minimal and temporary.

5) Do we have any halfway housing for mental health ex-offenders?

The Department contracts for 23 mental health halfway house beds at Rogers House (co-ed) in Waterbury and Sierra (male) in New Haven. The agency also works closely with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services on re-entry planning for mental health offenders, addressing housing and a continuum of care and treatment once they are released to include doctor's appointments and medication. We have also piloted supportive housing in Hartford for those with issues including mental illness that leads to them cycling through corrections.

6) How many offenders are released without any housing?

- It is the agency's commitment that no offender be released without housing. Our re-entry and discharge planning seeks to address housing as one of the offender's core issues. If the offender is without his or her own housing, attempts are made to place offenders with family and friends and if appropriate placement gives them a period of time to save for their own housing. If all else fails, the facility will work with a shelter in the offender's community to insure that a bed is available and in most cases will take the offender to the shelter upon discharge.

7) What services or mental health interventions are required of sex-offenders while incarcerated?

- An offender's sex offender treatment need score on a 1-5 scale (5 being the most severe) is determined during their initial assessment upon admission. It is important to note that the Department does not rely on the offender's current offense to determine this score but also considers the underlying facts, charges that may have been plea bargained, and even past behavior. Sex offenders are strongly encouraged to seek treatment while incarcerated as a requirement to be considered for parole. Ultimately however, it is not possible to force an offender's engagement in such programming. For these offenders however, there are very often requirements through probation, that they engage in treatment once placed in the community.