



*Office of Chief Public Defender  
State of Connecticut*

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

**Governor's Bill No. 6363**

*An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General  
Government, Conservation, Development, Regulation, Protection, Judicial and  
Corrections*

**Appropriations Committee**

**March 27, 2009**

The Office of Chief Public Defender opposes the closing of the Meriden and Bristol courthouses as proposed by Section 16 of this bill. The Governor's proposal to close these courts would also cut five (5) permanent Public Defender positions. Such a reduction of staff would result in constitutionally deficient representation for those clients whose cases would be heard in other courts. Public defender staff in New Britain, Middletown, Waterbury, and New Haven Geographical Area (GA) Courts already carry caseloads close to in excess of Public Defender Commission Caseload Goals for GA attorneys of 500 new cases per attorney per year. These guidelines were adopted as a result of the settlement agreement in *Rivera v. Rowland*, and exceed nationally recognized indigent defense standards. The retention of these five positions is absolutely essential to providing constitutionally required defense services for indigent defendants.

Such closing would also result in overcrowded and unsafe lock-up conditions in receiving courts. Currently, most court lock-ups are filled to capacity and provide no client confidentiality. Cases of incarcerated clients would move more slowly through the criminal justice system, due to extended continuance dates. It is also highly unlikely that the New Britain, Waterbury, New Haven, and Middletown courthouses have adequate office space for additional staff from all agencies involved in daily essential court functions.

Furthermore, Connecticut does not yet have an adequate mass transit system to facilitate transportation for those clients who have made bond to travel to courthouses in a timely fashion to avoid re-arrest on a charge of failure to appear.

For all of the above reasons, the Office of Chief Public Defender requests that the Meriden and Bristol courthouses remain open.