

**Appropriations Committee
Deficiency Hearing**

April 7, 2009

**Testimony of
Theresa C. Lantz, Commissioner
Department of Correction**

Good morning Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Theresa Lantz, Commissioner of the Department of Correction. I am joined today by Deputy Commissioner Carol Salisbury. In November I came before you to describe how a financial situation that began last fiscal year with record inmate population levels and inflation resulted in a deficit that carried forward into the current year.

I was also able to report good news about our population levels and about improved communications and cooperation throughout the justice system. Today I can tell you that the incarcerated population has continued to drop, to about 300 less than it was in November, and nearly 900 fewer than our all time high just over a year ago. Through the leadership of Governor Rell and the Legislature we are experiencing improved communications and cooperation throughout the justice system, providing the basis for more effective management of offenders and enhanced public safety. The professional staff of the Connecticut Department of Correction continues to provide safe, secure and efficient custody of the inmate population, as well as effective supervision of a growing number of offenders in the community.

We continue to work closely with our partners in the public and non-profit areas to focus attention and resources on offenders who can be appropriately diverted from incarceration or transitioned into the community in a very measured and methodical manner.

Two years ago, our budget was predicated on a significantly lower inmate population projection. However, through the gradual decline in the current population and vigorous attention to reducing our expenses, we have been able to improve our deficit projection from as high as \$26.5m in November to the current figure of \$16.92m.

In Personal Services, our overtime levels are dropping. While the greater part of our staffing is simply not discretionary, hiring constraints and lower population levels have reduced our Personal Services deficit projection to \$2.65m.

In Other Expenses, we have struggled to offset inflation in energy and food costs through greater efficiencies and by eliminating discretionary spending. In our package of information for the Subcommittee on March 9th we included a modest folder detailing some of those efforts. In

the interim we have responded to the Governor's call to reduce vehicles and limit purchasing to only the utmost necessities. With the assistance of an FAC transfer of \$1.76m our total projected deficiency in this area stands at just over \$13 million.

Finally, in the Workers Compensation account we project that expenses will outstrip funding this year by \$1.2m. Medical expenses exceed the prior year by 11%, paralleling a 13% increase in lost time claims.

Looking forward, the comprehensive action already taken to evaluate and manage offenders more thoroughly than ever before supports the potential of broader Criminal Justice and Correctional policy changes. Controlling the size of the inmate population through well considered diversion and reentry initiatives will allow us to reduce our costs while protecting public safety.

My staff and I remain committed to increasing efficiency and identifying cost savings in every aspect of our operations. As always, please be assured that public safety and the efficient and effective management of resources are priorities of my administration. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you today, and I would be happy to answer your questions.