

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

March 27, 2009

Testimony of Theresa C. Lantz, Commissioner
Department of Correction

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Commissioner Theresa Lantz and I am pleased to appear before you this afternoon in support of Governor Rell's initiative in Section 11 of House Bill 6363, *An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendation Concerning General Government, Conservation, Development, Regulation, Protection, Judicial and Corrections*.

The Department supports Section 11 of the bill, which would reinstate my discretion to place qualified inmates on furlough with up to 45 days of community supervision, a key period of transition back to the community through the restoration of language that would allow furloughs to be granted "for any compelling reason consistent with rehabilitation." Prior to its elimination last year with the enactment of Public Act 08-01, and prior to the enhancements of community supervision strategies implemented in the past year, the 30-day furlough program had a 97% successful completion rate. This is clearly the most successful discretionary program available to the incarcerated population. In addition to improving the re-entry process, this option also reduces the incarcerated population and reduces the state's costs. In fiscal year 2007, just over 3,300 offenders were released on re-entry furloughs. The loss of this option effectively added 274 inmates to our standing population, extending the incarceration of inmates who might otherwise have qualified to end their sentence with community supervision.

In addition to my support of the Governor's initiative, the Department is prepared to provide by April 1, 2009, a report in accordance with Public Act 09-2, the budget deficit mitigation measure adopted in February, concerning the estimated number of inmates that would be released and the cost savings that would be achieved if the authority of the commissioner to grant re-entry furloughs under section 18-101a of the general statutes was restored as of July 1, 2009. The report will provide various options for the legislature to consider.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon. I would be happy to address any questions you may have.