

Department of Correction

Testimony of Brian K. Murphy, Acting Commissioner

Judiciary Committee

Raised Bill No. 5486, *An Act Concerning Residency Restrictions for Registered Sexual Offenders*

March 22, 2010

Good morning, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. The Department of Correction would like to express its concerns about Raised Bill No. 5486, *An Act Concerning Residency Restriction for Registered Sexual Offenders*.

The Parole and Community Services Division employs an evidenced-based multidisciplinary approach to effectively manage registered sex offenders in the community. This approach includes techniques and interventions shown to result in positive outcomes and reduce sexual recidivism.

The residency restrictions proposed in Raised Bill No. 5486 would negatively impact the Department's ability to release and supervise sex offenders granted parole by the BPP because already scarce placement options would be drastically reduced. The majority of registered sex offenders on parole reside in major urban areas where schools and daycare centers are prevalent. In effect, future paroled sex offenders would no longer be able to live in major urban areas, limiting their access to parole offices, sex offender treatment, jobs, and other necessary services. Additionally, parole officers would lose the ability to effectively monitor risk factors related to sexual offending due to the certain increase in homelessness. Electronic monitoring would become difficult, if not impossible, to implement due to the lack of available power sources necessary to charge monitoring equipment.

Stable housing is a critical factor in the successful reintegration of sex offenders. Housing instability has been shown to increase general and sexual recidivism. The bill's provisions would restrict some paroled sex offenders from residing with supportive family or friends leading to isolation and an increased risk to reoffend. Residency restrictions are not supported by empirical evidence and there appears to be no relationship between proximity and recidivism.

Raised Bill No. 5486 does not distinguish between registered sex offenders who pose a risk to children and those who have a statutory offense or an offense against an adult. It does not recognize evidenced-based practices such as validated sex offender risk assessments used in the decision making process to place restrictions on paroled sex offenders.

The majority of sexual offenses against children are perpetrated by family members, friends, or others known to the victim. Unfortunately, a predatory offender intent on reoffending, can conceivably access a victim anywhere in the community. Studies have shown these offenders actually prefer targeting victims in neighborhoods where they will not be recognized.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's views on Raised Bill No. 5486. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.