

Good evening Chairman Prague, Chairman Ryan and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am Lisa Fontano a correction officer and executive board member of Correction Employee's Local 387. I am speaking for Council 4 AFSCME and its 5,000 correction members in favor of Senate Bill 96, An Act Concerning the Authorization of Bonds of the State for Replacement of Patrol Radio Equipment for Correction Officers and House Bill 5063, An Act Concerning Light Duty Work in the Department of Correction.

Regarding Senate Bill 96, it is of vital importance for correction officers to have up to date reliable patrol radios while performing duties in correction facilities. Connecticut correction officers do not carry weapons during most of their inmate supervision duties. Officers are reliant on their wits, a body alarm and often a patrol radio. As you know, a single officer often may have to supervise over 100 inmates at a time. The department has made some progress in providing newer radios that work in the facilities in the northern correction facility area. Staff in other facilities are still working with old radios that do not work in all parts of the facility. We know that the legislature has pushed to make this happen. We appreciate that you introduced this bill and urge you to please facilitate or urge Governor Rell to get properly working radios in all of the correction facilities.

We also appreciate your introducing the bill to mandate a Department of Correction light duty workers compensation program. Our jobs are difficult. Correction employees do get hurt on the job. There is inherent danger. Often an officer can come back to work, perform light duty for a short period and then when physically recovered perform all normal duties. The department has instituted a light duty pilot program. We would like to see it fully implemented. It is unfortunate to lose good correction officers, when the legislature's Program Review Committee has reported that we are 20 percent front-line staff short, when we don't need to.

Both of these bills will keep the public, staff and inmates safer. Please feel free to ask me any questions.

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