

**Testimony Appropriations Committee – Council 4 AFSCME –  
February 9, 2010**

Good evening Chairman Harp, Chairman Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Harry Ray Soucy, treasurer of Correction Employee's Local 387. I am speaking for the 35,000 members of Council 4 AFSCME. Specifically I am asking that the Webster correctional institute be reopened. No facility should close while overcrowding remains. Webster was recently closed through an action of Governor Rell.

There are currently about 18,500 in facilities that are designed to hold 17,000 inmates. Our understanding is that as of today there are as many as 7 out of 18 correction facilities where inmates are housed in "non-traditional" settings. In our experience this means inmates are housed on the floor in what are known as "sleds" – Tupperware type containers laid end to end, and side to side. Prison overcrowding is dangerous. It results in inhumane conditions for staff and inmates.

Overcrowding leads to short fuses and then to trouble. Tensions can run quite high in a correctional facility. Fights between inmates have started over such seemingly insignificant things as one inmate accidentally stepping on another inmate's towel. As the level of overcrowding goes up, the danger goes up. We have experienced conditions where there have been as many as 30 inmates per toilet in an assigned area. This sort of condition can lead to the spread of illnesses. Diseases such as MRSA and tuberculosis have been found in Connecticut prisons.

Overcrowding has led to the Northern correctional facility being used to house inmates that it was not planned to house. Northern was set up as an institution for the most dangerous inmates. The change in the type of inmate and increase in inmates has created a more difficult situation at Northern and led to several recent injuries of correction officers there.

There is a better solution than packing inmates into fewer facilities and creating more dangerous situations for the public and staff. We believe that it would be better to raise a small amount of income tax from the richest state citizens (who have benefitted from whopping state and federal tax breaks over the past two decades) and close corporate tax loopholes than take it out of the hides of state employees injured in the line of duty or to close prisons in a time of prison overcrowding.