



State of Connecticut

SENATE

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

SENATOR JOHN A. KISSEL
CHIEF DEPUTY MINORITY LEADER

16 FREW TERRACE
ENFIELD, CONNECTICUT 06082
TELEPHONES
HARTFORD: (860) 240-0531
HOME: (860) 745-0688
TOLL FREE: 1-800-842-1421
FAX: (860) 240-8306
E-MAIL: John.A.Kissel@cga.ct.gov

CHAIRMAN
PROGRAM REVIEW AND
INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

RANKING MEMBER
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING

MEMBER
GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE

Government Administration and Elections Committee

John A. Kissel, State Senator, 7th District

***Re: HB 5404 – An Act Concerning the Nondisclosure of Certain Information
Regarding Department of Correction Employees to Inmates Under the Freedom of
Information Act***

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, Senator McLachlan, Representative Hetherington and members of the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of *HB 5404 AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONDISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN INFORMATION REGARDING DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION EMPLOYEES TO INMATES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT*.

As you are likely aware, the Judiciary Committee just last week voted unanimously in support of a very similar proposal. I am encouraged that the GAE Committee has also recognized the importance of this legislation and has raised it for a public hearing. As a ranking member on the Judiciary Committee, I did not have the opportunity to testify in support of the bill and this is a welcome opportunity.

In talking with correctional officers who have been targets of inmate hostility, it became clear to me that we need to take every possible precaution to protect correctional officers from possible retaliation and that's why I have been a lead proponent of this legislation. Not only is the safety of correctional staff being threatened through misuse of the FOI process, but the safety of their families and other private citizens is also at risk. I worked hard last year to get everyone on the same page and I have already started speaking with key players again this year. I am also happy to report that in a somewhat unusual fashion, the Department of Correction and the COs are on the same page. Now that many more legislators are aware of this problem, I feel confident that this legislation will garner the necessary votes in both the House and Senate and am committed to working toward that end.

Our COs deserves the protection this bill offers and no one is more aware of that or working harder than me and I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak in support of it. Last week's vote in Judiciary was a huge victory and should the GAE Committee look favorably on this bill as well, I will be even more optimistic that this important proposal will be enacted into law before the end of session. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.