

Department of Correction

Testimony of Leo C. Arnone, Commissioner

Committee on Aging

Senate Bill No. 1108, *An Act Concerning Senior Safety Zones*

March 8, 2011

The Department of Correction has concerns about Senate Bill No. 1108, *An Act Concerning Senior Safety Zones*.

The Department's 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. Restricting access to potential victims is a critical intervention which reduces the likelihood of future sexual victimization. Parole officers responsible for the supervision of registered sex offenders make decisions to exclude certain registered sex offenders from contact with minors and other potential victims using all available information and input from the division's collaborative partners.

These partners include contracted sex offender treatment providers from The Connection Inc., Center for the Treatment of Problem Sexual Behavior; polygraph examiners; victim advocates from Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS); state police from the Connecticut State Police Sex Offender Registry Unit; local law enforcement responsible for matters relating to registered sex offenders; Department of Correction institutional sex offender treatment providers; and staff from the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Parole's sex offender management techniques and other interventions include the use of validated sex offender risk assessments, individualized case management plans, offense specific cognitive-behavioral sex offender treatment, and intensive supervision including frequent compliance checks and GPS monitoring, toxicology testing, sex offender registration, victim advocacy, computer monitoring and computer forensic examinations, and surveillance.

The residency restriction provisions in Senate Bill No. 1108 would negatively impact the Department's ability to release and effectively supervise sex offenders on parole because already scarce placement options would be drastically reduced. 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. The majority of registered sex offenders on currently on parole reside in major urban areas where schools, daycares, and senior centers are prevalent.

Additionally, parole officers would lose the ability to effectively monitor risk factors related to sexual offending due to the certain increase in offender homelessness. Electronic monitoring devices would become difficult, if not impossible, to utilize 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.

While the majority of sexual offenses are perpetrated by family, friends, or others known to the victim, 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 other than their own where they will not be recognized.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's view on this matter.