March 4, 2011

Appropriations Committee
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone 860-240-0390

Dear Appropriations Committee Members,

RE: Testimony Opposing the Malloy Budget Summary: Department of Children and Families, Page B-140: Recommended Significant Changes-Parole Services

My name is Wayne Winthrop Mundell; I am a resident of East Lyme and have been employed by the State of Connecticut/DCF and the Bureau of Juvenile Justice for the past 15 years. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to voice my concerns and strong opposition to this line item in the current budget proposal.

I currently cover all of Windham County and New London County. As you know this is a significantly large geographical area to cover. Our current expectations and benchmarks are high in our department as they should be. When I first joined the Parole Department we worked the best that we could with few resources to supervise the highest risk juvenile delinquent population. We had a facility that was outdated and unsafe for the community and adolescents we served in Long Lane School. We did the best that we could to make our division work with what we had to work with. As our population changed we changed with it. The Connecticut Juvenile Training School was built as a state of the art facility for our male population. The problem was the transition from Long Lane School to CJTS was not seamless. When our population moved into this new facility it was under political pressure to do so in an untimely manner. The adolescents were transitioned into a nice new facility that had little to no programming put in place. Once again we took initiative to change as a department. We started to hire more staff as positions were allocated. We realized that once Long Lane School was closed our female population had significantly less resources and were now at an even higher risk. Common sense dictated that many young women who were provided safe and secure housing at Long Lane may now end up with out an appropriate place to go when they are in crisis. Our worse fears happened, more and more young women ended up with inmate numbers at Janet S. York Women's prison as there were no longer any appropriate safe and secure programs to house them. After our department had extraordinary success in our "pilot" program for sex offenders we changed again to attempt to meet the needs of these young women with significant mental health and behavioral issues. Our staff took the initiative to focus on this left out population by going after hours to Niantic Women's prison in order to gather important information that would help us better understand the needs of these young women who were now incarcerated in an adult population because of our system's failures. We did a thorough study and analysis/risk assessment and developed our newly formed gender specific programming to support our findings. We learned through our experience with the previously formed special needs offender unit that we were better able to supervise and treat these populations with higher expectations,

more benchmarks and smaller caseloads. With the hiring of our new staff we were able to keep in tact our very successful special care unit for sex offenders and fire setters as well as increase our development in the newly formed gender specific programming for our female population. What started as another pilot program morphed into several specific units and workers that were assigned to this significantly underfunded population. Like the special care unit, these workers have been afforded the opportunity to receive special and specific training for the population they serve. These two units over the years have gained invaluable knowledge through training and experience in managing these difficult populations.

With the proposed reduction of 22 Parole Staff who are direct care providers to the very high risk and sometimes dangerous population this will decimate our division. We will no longer be able to provide specialized care and supervision to the highest risk and neediest populations. I am not going to regurgitate all of the previous testimony from my valued co-workers in my department. Please take your time to carefully go over and refer to each testimony. There not only will be no cost savings but significant cost increases as we see the ripple effects of this decision. All of the statistics about swiftly rising caseloads, inevitable cost increases the state will be facing as our residential, detention and secure facility populations including the prison population rise are clear and convincing. Is important to focus on where the population we supervise is now and where the projected and quickly numbers are going. We have seen a recent spike in cases coming in with the 16 year old age change legislation. We are now starting to gear up for and focus on the 17 year old population change that will take effect in July 2012 with the Governor's continued support. All auspices and disciplines that are preparing for this new legislation are also gearing up and focusing on how we as a system are going to provide supervision, public safety and treatment to current and quickly growing population. CSSD Juvenile Probation, Detention Centers, Connecticut Juvenile Training School are all hiring in order to provide appropriate staffing levels and supervision of these young men and women. This would be the worst time to attempt to gain savings by eliminating positions in our department. Where using our common sense has helped us in the past to deal the ever dynamic field of Juvenile Justice, not using common sense this time will have long lasting negative effects. This will only lead to further disruption in state agencies as other state workers who are highly trained and experienced loose their positions as the State attempts to shuffle employees around in order to show the public they are saving money. This should not be a difficult decision to take these cuts out of the proposed budget. Please remember this; safety does not take a Holiday. Thank your for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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