

Department of Correction

Testimony of Leo C. Arnone, Commissioner

Appropriations Committee
Deficiency Hearing

April 11, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Leo Arnone. I am the Commissioner of the Department of Correction.

When I appeared before you in December I was pleased to share the fact that our projected deficiency for this year had been reduced from \$12 million dollars to \$11 million. As of April 1, our projection was further reduced to \$8 million dollars, based on projected surpluses of \$2 million each in Workers' Compensation and Correctional Managed Health Care. We are also holding an additional \$3 million from Correctional Managed Health Care, which would further reduce our projected need to \$5 million. Finally, in order to meet cash flow needs, on April 1, OPM released holdback funds sufficient to meet our needs to the end of the year.

The key factor driving our expenditures is the size of the inmate population, and our improved projections reflect a reduction of about 600 inmates compared to last year. Improved results in our Workers' Compensation account and our contract with Correction Managed Health Care, as well as diligent cost control by my staff, have also contributed to lower costs.

At the same time our facilities remain safe and secure. As we move forward, the safety of the public, my staff and all inmates remains our primary commitment.

As you know, I recently determined that it would be appropriate to close the Gates Correctional Institution in Niantic. Because Gates has been a relatively inefficient housing location, we benefit both from the direct savings of closing the facility and from reassigning staff to more efficient facilities. With a target date of June 1, I expect that this change will help reduce our expenses in the current year.

My staff and I will continue seeking methods to lower the cost of correctional operations in Connecticut. As you know a number of significant initiatives are under discussion in this legislative session. I am confident that with the support of the Governor, the Legislature, and our partners in the Justice system we will be able to meet our commitment to public safety and also reduce the financial burden on Connecticut taxpayers.