



**AFRICAN-AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591
(860) 240-8555
FAX (860) 240-8444**

Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

Monday, March 21st, 2011

10:00 AM in Room 2C of the LOB

Good morning/afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Doyle and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Frank Sykes the Legislative Analyst of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) a non-partisan state agency. This Commission is an advocate for the African-American community and accomplishes its mission primarily through research, policy analysis and advocacy. I am here today to speak in support of **House Bill. (HB) 6606 – An act concerning the determination of the town of residence of incarcerated persons.**

Firstly African-Americans make up the vast majority of the incarcerated population at both the juvenile and adult levels of the criminal justice system. Roughly 44 percent of the children represented in detention centers in the state are African-American¹ and at least 42 percent of African-Americans make up the state's prison population.² The lifetime likelihood of incarceration for African

¹ Connecticut Voices for the Children, Reforming Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System. Racial and Ethnic Biases

² Connecticut Inmate Population by Race and Ethnicity

Americans is 16.2 percent almost twice that of Hispanics at 9.4 percent and more than six times that of whites at 2.5 percent. Among men, African Americans have a 28.5 percent chance of incarceration over their lifetime, while Hispanics have a 16.2 percent chance and whites have a 4.4 percent chance. These are the facts however what is often overlooked is the fact that these prisoners are counted as residents of the town the prison facility is located rather than the town of their original place of residence as is required by Connecticut law. Since population size determines political representation at the municipal, state and federal level, certain districts in our state have more political power as a result of this unfair distribution of people. The aim of any democratic institution is to ensure that representation is fair, equal and accessible. The problem is not only political in nature but also economic. Federal and state governments appropriate funding based on population size, density and projections. Therefore inaccurate reporting of district's population can have a major impact on the availability of resources for towns underrepresented. Why does this matter? It matters because most prisoners are likely to return to the communities they lived in prior to incarceration.

In view of these findings we ask that this gross misrepresentation in population reporting is corrected to reflect the true numbers in all Connecticut's towns. Connecticut should follow the lead of Delaware, Maryland and New York states that count incarcerated people at their home addresses.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.