

**Testimony of Liz Dupont-Diehl**

**VP of Development and Communication, Career Resources Inc.  
Co-Chair, Bridgeport ReEntry Collaborative**

**Judiciary Committee Public Hearing**

SUPPORT for HB6606 AAC the Determination of the Residence of Incarcerated Persons for the Purposes of Legislative Districting  
SB 1193 AAC the Determination of the Town of Residence of Incarcerated Persons

March 21, 2011

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for letting me testify here today. My name is Liz Dupont-Diehl and I am VP of Development and Communication for Career Resources Inc. and also Co-Chair of the Bridgeport ReEntry Collaborative, a coalition of providers, former offenders, and citizens that has met every month for four years to share resources and discuss reentry.

My experience working with people returning from prison to Bridgeport informs my support for ending prison-based gerrymandering.

Because of my work with individuals going through the re-entry process, and witnessing their experience in trying to find employment and become self-sustaining, I am familiar with their home communities and have observed the importance of equal representation first hand.

All Connecticut citizens rely on the state to provide fair representation to all of our communities.

I know most prisoners cannot vote, but in the cases where they can, they are required to vote by absentee ballot in their home districts. Prisoners and their families, their neighbors and friends, all rely on the representation provided by their home district members in the General Assembly.

**All communities suffer when a small portion of Connecticut residents are granted more than their fair share of representation while the rest of us effectively have our votes diluted.**

This inequity is felt particularly strongly by Connecticut's African-American and Latino residents. For example, State House District 59, (Enfield) claims more than 3,000 African Americans and Latinos as constituents. But 90% of the African Americans and 74% of Latinos are not actually legal residents of the district, but rather are temporarily incarcerated in the Enfield, Willard and Robinson Correctional Institutions.

According to Peter Wagner of the Prison Policy Initiative:

"The Census Bureau counts people in prison as if they were residents of the prison cells. Under state laws, however people in prison remain residents of their pre-incarceration addresses, and the average state prison sentence is less than 34 months anyway. All states but two bar prisoners from voting, and this disproportionately young, male, urban, Black and Latino population is then counted as living in one of 1,500 prisons concentrated in rural America. Using prison populations to inflate the populations of the districts that contain prisons thus serves to dilute the political power of everyone else."

Giving a few communities extra representation just because they happen to have a correctional facility is not fair to the rest of Connecticut's citizens. On behalf of the communities I serve, and as a resident of Windsor, and on behalf of all Connecticut residents who do not happen to live near a prison, I urge you to **Support HB6606 and SB 1193.**

Thank you for your attention.

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