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Testimony of
Representative Charlie L. Stallworth
Before the Judiciary Committee
In Support of House Bill 6606
March 21, 2011

Chairman Fox, Chairman Coleman, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 6606 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DETERMINATION OF THE RESIDENCE OF INCARCERATED PERSONS FOR PURPOSES OF LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTING.

I support this bill for one simple reason -it is exceedingly fair. My hometown of Bridgeport had, as of March 2010, 1860 former residents incarcerated in DOC facilities. New Haven had 2051 former residents and Hartford had over 2600 former residents. Under the current rules of redistricting, those individuals are counted in the towns where their prisons are located. This bill seeks to have them counted in the towns where they last resided prior to arrest and conviction.

These incarcerated persons are our sons and daughters, our sisters and brothers, and they have no natural nexus to the towns in which they currently are housed. Once released, the overwhelming majority will return to our community, where they will need and receive support, shelter and services because it is the place they call home.

I fully understand the hardship those host towns incur by having a prison in their community. But those towns (according to Common Cause) get proportionally higher representation rates in the General Assembly for their residents because they house inmates from my town.

The cost of those returning inmates are borne by our largest cities, either through services or by higher crime rates caused by those who emerge from incarceration unchanged and unrehabilitated.

When urban inmates and their families seek support, they reach out to organizations and individuals in their hometowns- pastors, social service providers, and yes, their state legislators. Counting thousands of urban inmates as residents of non-urban towns is a distorted representation of the true composition of our State and can diminish the voice of urban and black and Latino citizens in the General Assembly. Counting them in their town of origin will provide a fair more accurate picture of our state and therefore a more accurate representation in the General Assembly. Thank you.