

Department of Correction
Testimony of Joseph Haggan, Director of Parole and Community Services

Judiciary Committee
April 4, 2011

Raised Bill No. 6643, An Act Concerning Residency Restrictions for Certain Registered Sexual Offenders

Good morning, Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Joseph Haggan, Director of Parole and Community Services for the Department of Correction. Joining me this morning is Parole Manager Eric Ellison. On behalf of Commissioner Arnone, who is unable to be present due to a prior commitment, we are here this morning to express the Department's opposition to Raised Bill No. 6643, *An Act Concerning Residency Restrictions for Certain Registered Sexual Offenders*.

The Parole and Community Services Division employs an evidenced-based multidisciplinary approach to effectively manage registered sex offenders in the community. This approach includes techniques and interventions shown to result in positive outcomes and reduce sexual recidivism. Restricting access to potential minor victims is a critical intervention which reduces the likelihood of future sexual victimization. Parole officers responsible for the supervision of registered sex offenders make decisions to exclude certain registered sex offenders from contact with minors using all available information and input from the division's collaborative partners.

These partners include contracted sex offender treatment providers from The Connection Inc., Center for the Treatment of Problem Sexual Behavior; polygraph examiners; victim advocates from Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS); state police from the Connecticut State Police Sex Offender Registry Unit; local law enforcement responsible for matters relating to registered sex offenders; Department of Correction institutional sex offender treatment providers; and staff from the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Parole's sex offender management techniques and other interventions include the use of validated sex offender risk assessments, polygraph examinations, individualized case management plans, offense specific cognitive-behavioral sex offender treatment, and intensive supervision including frequent compliance checks and GPS monitoring, toxicology testing, sex offender registration, victim advocacy, computer monitoring and computer forensic examinations, and surveillance.

The residency restriction provisions in Raised Bill No. 6643 would negatively impact the Department's ability to place and effectively supervise sex offenders on parole because already scarce housing options would be drastically reduced. In reality, future paroled sex offenders would no longer be able to live in major urban areas, limiting their access to parole offices, sex offender treatment, jobs, and other necessary services. The

majority of registered sex offenders currently on parole reside in major urban areas where schools, daycares, and senior centers are concentrated. Additionally, parole officers would lose the ability to effectively monitor risk factors related to sexual offending due to the certain increase in offender homelessness. Electronic monitoring devices would become difficult, if not impossible, to utilize due to the lack of available power sources necessary to charge monitoring equipment.

Stable housing is a critical factor in the successful reintegration of sex offenders. Housing instability has been shown to increase general and sexual recidivism. The bill's provisions would restrict some paroled sex offenders from residing with supportive family or friends leading to isolation and an increased risk to reoffend. Residency restrictions are not supported by empirical evidence and there appears to be no relationship between proximity and recidivism.

Sex offender registration, as defined by C.G.S. Chapter 969, is based solely on crime of conviction and is not a reliable predictor of risk. This system should not serve as the basis for residency restrictions. Relevant static and dynamic factors, shown to be predictive of sexual recidivism, are absent from the Connecticut sex offender registry.

While the majority of sexual offenses against minors are perpetrated by family, friends, or others known to the victim, a predatory offender intent on reoffending can conceivably access a minor victim anywhere in the community. Studies have shown these offenders actually prefer targeting minor victims in neighborhoods other than their own where they will not be recognized.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's views on Raised Bill No. 6643. We would be happy to answer any questions you have.