Judiciary Committee

Public Hearing, April 1, 2013

Testimony of

James Dzurenda, Interim Commissioner

Department of Correction

RE: H.B. No. 6642, An Act Establishing a Child Nursery Facility at the Connecticut Correctional Institution, Niantic

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In response to HB 5288, AAC the Children of Incarcerated Women, raised in the 2012 Legislative session, The Department of Correction partnered with interested lawmakers, community advocates, along with many stakeholder states agencies to conduct a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a nursery facility on site at the York Correctional Institution.

As stated in testimony surrounding this issue in years past, the DOC is in strong support of providing early child-bonding in some capacity. The rationale rests upon evidence that indicates that such bonding results in positive future outcomes of both the mother and child. Examples are lower recidivism for the offender/mother and greater self-reliance and higher self esteem, successful peer relationships and better coping skills for their children.

So without restating what has already been documented and presented to you in the January 2, 2013 Prison Nursery Feasibility Report, which will be placed on the CGA website attached to this testimony, we have presented a number of options to accomplish the intent of this legislative initiative.

With this being said, the cost analysis of options before you in the report, have all shown to be fiscally out of reach and cost prohibitive, with the exception of the last option, which is to expand the already existing nursery program, NEON's Women and Children Halfway House, that we have long contracted with to provide the very same services suggested in the bill before us today.

And while the halfway house is not physically located at the York Correctional Institution, and it does not meet the exact language in the bill, it does provide a viable option, as this program is already licensed, and staff has been trained. Expansion of such a program could be done in the short term and require minimal funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this very important legislative initiative.