Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing

April 15, 2013

Testimony of

James Dzurenda, Interim Commissioner

Department of Correction

SB 1159, AAC the Establishment of a Vocational Education Program at the John R. Manson Youth Institution, Cheshire

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony with regard to the above-referenced bill.

The Department of Correction has long invested many of the Department's education and vocational resources to the Manson Youth Institution (MYI). In fact this facility has one of the most comprehensive vocational compendiums in the State. We have a strong belief, based on supporting evidence that an offender who discharges from prison with a skill, consistent with the state's emerging workforce needs, is less likely to return to incarceration.

With that being said, we would graciously support the initiative in this bill, to work collaboratively with the Department of Labor to implement a pilot program of vocational education, within available appropriations. MYI's bed capacity is just over 700 and we presently have approximately 100 inmates participating in the vocational programs that are currently being offered as listed below:

Auto Body Repair

This program emphasizes the fundamentals of safety, welding, straightening, refinishing, mechanical principles, manual skills, framework and good work habits. Students complete 300 hours of theory and 600 hours of shop practice. The program includes safety, metalworking, surface preparation, painting, glass and estimating. This vocational training prepares inmates to acquire a skilled, well-paying job in the community.

Automotive Technology

This is a technical program designed for students that wish to make a career as an automotive technician. Theory and practical applications of automotive systems and components are studied in detail. Instruction in diagnostic testing, precision measuring tools, and troubleshooting of the automobile are emphasized. This vocational training positions inmates to acquire a skilled job in the community.

Computer Support Technology

The class prepares students to support personal computers. This class includes current technology such as managing and maintaining notebook computers and Windows XP. This class takes students from the "just-a-user" level to the "I can fix it" level for common PC hardware and software concerns. The course was designed to be self paced to maximize learning potential, includes step by step instructions on installation, maintenance, optimizing system performance and troubleshooting.

Culinary Arts

This course stresses culinary arts safety and sanitation as well as tool and equipment usage. Through practice and discussion, students are taught skills in basic cooking, methods, culinary techniques, weights, measures and recipe conversions. Participants earn a Safe Serve Certificate after passing a test administered by the National Restaurant Association. This program is an apprenticeship program approved through the CT State Department of Labor.

Graphic Print & Technology

The Graphic Arts/Printing course is designed to provide students the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to work in the printing field. Students gain an understanding of the overall printing process to include graphics layout, design, production printing and binding. Students concentrate on proper shop safety procedures, and desktop publishing skills. Each student receives "hands on" instruction operating single color offset presses, two color presses, paper cutters and bindery equipment. Class theory work includes learning terminology related to the field and methods of managing quality control processes. Students learn basic equipment upkeep and care, as well as equipment problem diagnosis and minor equipment repair.