Good morning Senator Coleman, Rep Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is **Susan Quinlan** and I am the Executive director of Families in Crisis, Inc. Families in Crisis is a not for profit agency that for over 30 years has provided counseling and support services for offenders and their families in Connecticut.

I am here today to ask you to support bill **6642, An Act Establishing a Child Nursery Facility at the Connecticut Correctional Institution, Niantic.**

Every individual that enters the criminal justice system is connected with family members and communities that will share in the consequences of their incarceration. When offenders go to jail their families do time too. Offenders who do not have positive family support often re-offend and tragically studies show that their children are more likely to repeat the cycle. The economic and social costs to our citizens and communities are enormous.

CT, like many other states, is looking for ways to not only be tough on crime but also smart about crime. This bill provides that opportunity. Separating infants from their mothers at such a venerable time (imprisonment) destines the collapse of the family. This bill will allow the state to explore the possibility of promoting parent child relations which is the right thing to do.

When nurseries in prison are operated well, studies show that the mothers who participated have lower recidivism rates, their children have no adverse effects because they lived in a prison and babies grow into healthier children less likely to struggle for the rest of their lives with the trauma of parental separation and attachment disruption.

If we can keep infants and their mothers together we reduce the need for foster care placement, allow for the formation of maternal/child bonding (during a critical period in development) that promotes life long personal well being while at the same time achieve a cost savings.

The work of pioneers in the field (Bedford Hills in New York) know that to be successful we'll need to staff the program with professional child care experts, offer educational/vocational training for the mothers, provide family services and parent education and aftercare support in order for them to successfully care for themselves, and their children, upon release.

As you may know, a prison nursery would not be new for Connecticut. Many years ago York operated one (as many other states did). We need to consider this again because of the increasing number of women we are incarcerating, including those who are pregnant. I urge the Committee to support this bill and explore every opportunity to strengthen families in CT.