

Testimony- Commissioner Dora B. Schriro
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection

Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
March 4, 2014

Good morning, Senator Looney, Representative Janowski and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. It is a genuine pleasure to appear before you today having been nominated by Governor Malloy to be the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. I am honored to be considered, humbled by the confidence that the Governor and others have placed in me, and very excited by the opportunities that lie ahead to contribute to public safety and public service in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk briefly about the work I've undertaken, my academic background and related professional endeavors. After that I will touch upon my first month as Commissioner and activities I will pursue during my tenure.

I was in high school when I set out to pursue a career in public safety and public service. I've been fortunate. Over time I have led three state systems, two city agencies, and one federal office.

Just prior to joining Connecticut state government at the end of January, I was the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction since fall 2009, an organization with over 10,000 employees, more than 80,000 admissions annually and an operating budget of \$1.1 billion. I served in the Bloomberg administration. During my tenure in NYC, I successfully launched the country's first initiative with social impact bond funding; identified and implemented court-based diversion opportunities citywide for mentally ill inmates, and undertook comprehensive reform of punitive segregation. Before that, I was appointed Special Advisor to DHS Secretary Napolitano and was the founding Director of the Office of Detention Policy and Planning within Immigration and Customs Enforcement. During my tenure at DHS, I authored, *A Report on the Preliminary Assessment of ICE Detention Policies and Practices: A Recommended Course of Action for Systems Reforms*, DHS' template for improving the nation's immigration detention system.

I have also led both the Missouri and Arizona Departments of Corrections. I was the Director of the MO Department of Correction from 1993 to 2001 during which time the department was recognized four times by the Innovations in American Government program as finalist and semi-finalist, and three times by the Council of State Governments Innovations as winner and finalist. I was the Director of the AZ Department of Correction from 2003 to 2009 during which time we were selected the 2008 Winner of the Innovations in American Government award. We also lowered recidivism by 28 percent and reduced bed day utilization by \$5.6 million and state inmates donated \$1.4 million to crime victim organizations. In each of these three state positions (MO, AZ and CT); I was also the first and only woman to have served in these capacities. In addition, I was first Warden and then later, Commissioner of the St. Louis City Division of Corrections.

When not at work, I enjoy teaching graduate Criminal Justice and Corrections law classes and publishing in the areas of innovation and systems reform. I'm also an avid gardener, a really good cook and novice sailor.

I'm not a stranger to New England. I am a graduate of Northeastern University (BA cum laude) and the University of Massachusetts-Boston (MS) and first entered the work force here. I'm also a lifelong learner. I earned a Doctorate in Administration from Columbia University in 1984 and a Juris Doctorate from St. Louis University in 2002.

I am proud to say that I was recognized by my peers as the country's top correctional administrator in 1999; received the National Governors Association Distinguished Service to State Government Award in 2006; earned the Innovations in American Government Award for Arizona's comprehensive pre-release strategy, *Getting Ready*, in 2008; and was presented with the US Department of Justice Allied Professional Award in 2012 for exceptional service to crime victims. I currently serve as a Commissioner on the Boards of the Women's Refugee Commission and the ABA Commission on Immigration. I am also a member of the Board of the NYC Horticulture Society and the ABA standards subcommittees for both Corrections and Immigrations. These affiliations moving forward will expand as well to reflect my new responsibilities.

Imbedded in this introduction, are several themes: My willingness to reach out to others, to listen and to learn; a steadfast commitment to excellence and innovation through public service and public safety; a clear understanding of the paramilitary culture and unconditional regard for the contributions made by both uniformed and civilian personnel; and genuine respect for all of our partners and stake holders including but not limited by any means, crime victims and survivors, the state's diverse municipalities and organized labor.

During my first month as Commissioner I've traveled the state, covering the three districts of the State Police and the five regions of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, touring the 11 troops, visiting our Police and Fire Academies, State Crime Lab, Connecticut Fusion Center and Emergency Operation Center. I addressed COST's Town Hall meeting, appeared before legislative committees, testified before the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission and participated in several boards on which I now serve. I have also been reviewing legislation, reading reports and collecting data. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, the department that I now lead, has many assets mostly notably its exceptional workforce as does Connecticut; the breadth and depth of individuals providing leadership in their communities and at the Capitol is striking.

In the first year, it is my plan to bring together both line staff and supervisors from the six divisions to set agency goals, adopt metrics, and form workgroups to make improvements where warranted and to take measurable strides towards excellence in public protection and emergency services within and across the divisions and alongside our state and local partners.
