Testimony of Aliyah Henry, member of the Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice
Appropriations Hearing – Department of Corrections Budget FY2020 - FY2021
Monday, March 4th, 2019

Rep. Walker, Sen. Osten and and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for reading my testimony. My name is Aliyah Henry and I am a UConn School of Social Work student and member of the Katal, Center for Health, Equity, and Justice. I would like to address the proposed budget for the Department of Corrections (DOC) for fiscal year 2020 to 2021. I am glad to see that the funds allocated to the DOC will continue to support a declining incarceration population and reentry efforts, however, I also believe some can be expanded upon. Here are some of the proposed items in the budget in which I support:

- The governor plans to address the opioid epidemic in prison, by implementing a medication-assisted treatment process so that people suffering from addiction can get the treatment they need while incarcerated.
- The governor has also proposed that he plans to close four prison units which will result in a number of savings. Staff positions will not be lost because they can be redeployed to other locations in need due to the increased amount of prisoners who have been relocated there. He has also proposed to invest in implementing state ID’s for individuals exiting incarceration.
- For juveniles, the governor has proposed to appoint a professional mental health resource counselor to come up with suicide prevention efforts for incarcerated youth. He has also proposed to implement a training curriculum program in Manson Youth Institute modeled after the TRUE unit at Cheshire.
  - To go a step further, I would suggest that not only do we have a single mental health counselor and TRUE program in Manson, but multiple counselors and training curriculum programs across all correctional institutions.

I would also like to make some recommendations to support an equitable justice system, and a coordinated and rehabilitative reentry process that begins the moment a person is incarcerated. Here are my recommendations:

- The cost of parole, including recidivism for those on parole, is expensive and can be reduced by reforming our system of parole to work in collaboration with other organizations and use less punitive measures. High rates of recidivism could be a result of the heavy restrictions parolees have.
- Investing in reentry efforts would also prove to be cost beneficial since many people recidivate due to feeling hopeless from limited access to services. Basic needs such as housing, health and employment services are still difficult to access for formerly incarcerated people. Justice reinvestment and additional funding is needed.

I believe all of these may have a positive impact on Connecticut as we move to ensure that we have a safe stable society for all.

Sincerely,
Aliyah Henry