



Ned Lamont
Governor

STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION



Rollin Cook
Commissioner

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

Good Morning Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and the members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Rollin Cook, Commissioner of the Department of Correction (DOC) and I am submitting this testimony in opposition to the prohibition of the use of Administrative Segregation and Restrictive Housing Status contained in Senate Bill 1109, An Act Concerning Solitary Confinement. To my knowledge, there is no state in the country which operates its prisons with this extreme restriction on its ability to ensure that prison environment is safe for its employees, inmates and General Public.

Currently, out of a population of approximately 13,300 offenders there are 29 offenders on Restrictive Housing Status. That means that only .2% of our total population has been administratively placed on Administrative Segregation.

The Department of Correction reserves the use of our highest level of supervision known as Administrative Segregation (AS) status for the most dangerous offenders whose violent behavior has demonstrated their inability to be safely managed in a general population setting. Recommendations for a hearing to determine placement on AS typically follow a significant incident that has proven to jeopardize the safety of the community, correctional staff or other offenders.

Examples of incidents that would meet the threshold for consideration include, but are not limited to:

- **An inmate escape from custody;**
- **An inmate assault against an agency employee; and/or,**
- **An inmate related incident involving the use of a dangerous weapon.**

The Connecticut Department of Correction is committed to maintaining safe environments that allow incarcerated individuals the opportunity to participate in programs that will reduce their likelihood of returning to prison. In order to fulfill this obligation to the citizens of this state, our facilities need to have a system of rules and regulations that clearly outlines what is allowed and what is not allowed. In addition,

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DOC must enforce some level of reasonable consequence for each infraction. This system of law and order is known as the Code of Penal Discipline and can be found within our agency's Administrative Directives. This system has been in place since the inception of our agency and essentially keeps the public, staff and offenders safe.

Unlike other states, Connecticut does not place offenders on this status indefinitely and the goal is always to correct behavior and return to general population as soon as can be safely done.

We utilize a phase system with associated programming aimed to reinforce positive behavior through the gradual reinstatement of privileges. Furthermore, in recognizing the unique challenges in providing positive behavior modification strategies to a mandated client, the Connecticut Department of Correction ensures that clinical and custodial assessment's, programming and multi-disciplinary reviews occur for each individual. Each of these contributing factors affect the determination on whether or not an inmate is placed or continues as being classified on Administrative Segregation.

A historical review of data related to offenders on this status shows a significant decrease in utilization over the years with the figures hovering between 150-250 between 2003 and 2010. Our success was memorialized in a publication co-authored by the Arthur Liman Public Interest Program at Yale Law School and the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA). The study released in 2015, **ranked Connecticut amongst the top five states in the country utilizing effective strategies to minimize the use of Administrative Segregation.**

At my direction, the Department is already in the process of reviewing its policies on Administrative Segregation and Restrictive Housing Status to ensure that our use is as targeted as it can safely be for staff, inmates and the General Public - concerning when they are used, how long and which privileges are limited during its duration. I am reaching out to the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Association of State Correctional Administrators to make sure that Connecticut is adopting best practices. The Department welcomes the legislature in participating in this process.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to express the Department of Correction's strong opposition to the prohibition on the use of Administrative Segregation and Restrictive Housing.

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