Judiciary Committee Hearing  
Friday, March 25th 2022 

Testimony of Jordan Fairchild, 
Coordinator and Community Organizer, 
Keep The Promise Coalition 

**In support of S.B. 458**  
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Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee: 

My name is Jordan Fairchild and I am the Coordinator and Community Organizer for Keep The Promise Coalition (KTP), a grassroots group of advocates with lived experience of mental health, addiction, and co-occurring conditions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the following bills. 

**S.B. 458, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE INCARCERATED** 

When people enter the justice system, they often bring with them pre-existing mental health conditions and substance use disorders, and in many cases, their incarceration comes as the result of our justice system criminalizing such behavioral health conditions. For years, our systemic approach to mental health and substance use disorder in DOC facilities has not been to help these individuals recover. Mental health and substance use disorder treatment in DOC facilities is woefully underfunded, understaffed, and low quality. Furthermore, time spent in DOC facilities can be traumatic, as is also true of the time many of these individuals spend leading up to justice system involvement. I support S.B. 458, which would require DOC, DMHAS, and OPM to review, evaluate, and make recommendations on the provision of substance use disorder treatment services, mental health services, and re-entry to individuals who are incarcerated. 

**S.B. 459, AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMISSION FOR CORRECTIONAL OVERSIGHT, THE USE OF ISOLATED CONFINEMENT, SECLUSION, RESTRAINTS, STRIP SEARCHES, SOCIAL CONTACTS FOR INCARCERATED PERSONS, TRANSPARENCY FOR CONDITIONS OF INCARCERATION AND CORRECTIONAL OFFICER TRAINING.** 

Black and brown people, and people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders are incarcerated at a disproportionately high rate compared to our state’s population as a whole. The use of isolated confinement, therefore, is also an instance of systemic racism and ableism in
The PROTECT Act, as revived this year, would regulate a number of DOC practices, including limiting the use of isolated confinement and lockdowns, seclusion, strip searches and restraint. These practices are traumatic and damaging to the mental health of incarcerated persons.

The bill would overhaul the requirements for DOC when using isolated confinement to provide for a more humane experience, including mandated minimum time outside the cell; providing the least restrictive environment when using isolated confinement; and providing a physician and mental health services following the use of isolated confinement, and subsequently requiring alternative placement should a serious mental illness be identified. It would also rightly ban the use of solitary confinement entirely for those who are pregnant, under 18, or over 65 years of age.

Furthermore, the bill would also implement welcomed additions such as training of DOC officers on serious mental illness and de-escalation, as well as training to promote their own wellness, including mitigating aggression, burnout, substance use, and the risk of suicide, all of which can also affect the individuals incarcerated and other officers. Requiring reporting on the prevalence of mental illness, use of force, and more will also help to inform future reforms, and ending the misuse of lockdowns, which became a means of evading Governor Lamont’s executive order, will prevent DOC staff from confining people and denying their basic needs for days and weeks on end.

Finally, establishing a Commission for Correctional Oversight, and including a plurality of stakeholders as sitting members of that commission, will help ensure oversight and accountability in assessing the needs and state of our corrections system.

I support S.B. 459, though much critical work remains to be done in reimagining our approach to justice. In the meantime, incarcerated people, who are disproportionately Black and brown, and disproportionately live with serious mental illness and substance use disorders continue to suffer under this system. I hope that S.B. 459 is only the start of a larger conversation and effort by the legislature to rethink our approach corrections.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.