

katal

CENTER FOR EQUITY,
HEALTH, AND JUSTICE

Testimony of Olivia Rinkes

Member of the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice

Testimony for the Public Health Committee of the CT General Assembly

**In support of SB 448, An Act Concerning the Delivery of Health Care and
Mental Care Services to People in Correctional Institutions**

March 21, 2022

Thank you Senator Anwar, Representative Steinberg, and members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. My name is Olivia Rinkes. I'm a resident of North Stonington CT, a member of the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice, and I'm testifying today in strong support of **SB 448, An Act Concerning the Delivery of Health Care and Mental Health Care Services to People in Correctional Institutions**.

Health care is absolutely a human right, and health care needs do not stop when a person enters the custody of a correctional facility. As incarcerated people are in the care of the state, it is the state's responsibility to provide basic needs. Health care services access, especially the inclusion of dental and mental health care services, should definitely be a priority for lawmakers this session.

We rely on incarceration too much in our state, and people who come home from correctional facilities often have more health care needs than when they go in. I've witnessed people get swept up in the criminal justice system, especially in the last two years of the pandemic and the uprisings. We need significant changes to our criminal justice system, and health care is a necessary step to help those already caught in the system.

In addition, in many ways, this bill could go further:

- Regular access to health services that include yearly examinations (especially dental care);
- The inclusion of a discharge plan, which would include referrals and appointments for released individuals to continue maintaining their health care plan and support with obtaining health insurance;
- An expansion of mental health services for incarcerated people;
- An improvement of health outcomes for incarcerated women at York Correctional Institution by expanding Sec 5 (c) line 238 to describe minimum prenatal visits once a month 0-28 weeks pregnant, every two weeks 28-36 weeks pregnant and once a week 36-40 weeks pregnant or more frequently for at risk pregnancies.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **SB 448, An Act Concerning the Delivery of Health Care and Mental Health Care Services to People in Correctional Institutions** and consider these additional recommendations to improve outcomes for incarcerated people. And, please consider changing the title of this bill to exclude the word "inmate."

Thank you,
Olivia Rinkes