

Name: Brian Withington
Title: VP and Corrections Officer
Organization or Agency: Ccl 4 AFSCME Local 1565 COs
Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed
NA

Testimony:

Chairman Dooley, Chairman Garcia and Members of the Corrections Advisory Committee.

My name is Brian Withington. I am the Vice President of Corrections Employee Local 1565. I am a 15 year corrections officer. I am here with elected union officials of the other two state corrections units, Local 387 in the Cheshire area and Local 391 in the Northern part of the state.

I speak against the candidacy of Barbara Fair for corrections ombudsman. Ms. Fair has a strong anti-corrections staff bias that she has shown repeatedly.

Fair accused two corrections employee members of this committee with obstructionism before the first meeting of this body even occurred (Barbara Fair (December 28, 2022, ITE, CT Mirror). This and many other public comments show that Ms. Fair has no respect for staff. This is sad. The preeminent organizational scientist of modern times, Dr. Peter Drucker, preached that if you want to improve any system you must listen to the line workers. You cannot improve the corrections system by ignoring and denigrating staff. You should see staff as an asset and as the experts that they are. Ms. Fair is incapable of doing this. In fact, just yesterday Ms. Fair mocked the educational attainment of corrections staff at a press conference in the Legislative Office Building. While some of my colleagues might come from humble backgrounds, I have never met a more professional group of individuals, who take pride in their Correctional careers.

Recently, one of our staff colleagues stopped a potentially deadly inmate on inmate assault. An inmate befriended and was pushing a wheelchair bound inmate. This inmate pulled out a shank and repeatedly stabbed the wheelchair bound inmate in the chest. Protocol is for staff to assemble in a greater number than involved inmates in a violent altercation. This staff member dove headfirst into the hallway, unarmed to stop the inmate with a knife from killing the wheelchair bound inmate. The video of this life saving action was posted publicly by CT News Junkie. This video did not surprise me. I have seen my colleagues risk their safety on numerous occasions to save inmates. This is probably why the DOC has a medal that it awards to staff for saving inmate lives. To read Ms. Fair's comments, one would think that staff is demonic. Our staff have a tough enough job without an ombudsman who regularly vilifies staff. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.