

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1543

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION.

Vote Date: 4/8/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/26/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

CO-SPONSORS:

Rep. Maryam Khan, 5th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

There have been discussions between legislators and the Department of Correction (DOC) on legislative priorities. This bill includes those priorities and is designed to streamline and simplify processes, resolve small drafting errors, keep up with technology, and enhance access to justice.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language strikes the seventh section of the bill regarding publishing cases filed against the DOC from 1/1/2000 to the present. It also extends the language of the eleventh section regarding body scanning to include all persons entering the facility.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Angel Quiros, Commissioner, Department of Corrections: Commissioner Quiros submitted testimony on this legislation expressing concerns regarding the intake process, attorney-client privilege, staffing requirements and the redundancy of the medical records access form, which is already provided to each person in custody.

William Tong, Attorney General of Connecticut: Attorney General Tong submitted testimony in opposition to section 7 of this legislation because of current policy restricting record keeping. Additionally, they are concerned these provisions could raise issues regarding attorney-client privilege. Ultimately, this would require more resources for their office.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Christine Cohen, State Senator, CT-12: Senator Cohen submitted testimony in support of this legislation because it moves the state in the right direction towards addressing the complex relationship between mental health and incarceration, which benefits all involved with the Department of Correction. This ultimately supports successful reentry into society.

Lucy Dathan, State Representative, CT-142: Representative Dathan submitted testimony in support of this legislation because of the provisions that seek to phase out strip searching, done so by purchasing body scanning machines, and a study on the practice.

DeVaughn Ward, Esq., Interim Correction Ombudsman: DeVaughn Ward submitted testimony in support of this legislation because it reflects growing recognition that the DOC must treat people with more humanity. He believes this adequately addresses the major issues of facility health and nutrition to medical transparency and dignity.

Anne Wennerstrand, MS, MSW, LCSW: Anne Wennerstrand submitted testimony in support of this legislation because she believes that the provisions outlined in this bill would have prevented the death of her nephew, Carl "Robby" Talbot; he died in CT DOC custody because of brutality attributed to behavior due to a severe psychotic episode.

Colleen Lord, Director, Talbot Advocacy Group: Colleen Lord submitted testimony in support of this legislation because her son Robby was killed by Corrections Officers during a mental health crisis. This bill addresses the errors that led to her son's death.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU CT: Jess Zaccagnino submitted testimony in support of this legislation because it enhances mental and physical health of incarcerated persons by providing improved medical evaluations and more nutritious meals.

Due to the high volume of testimony received for this bill, it is not possible to provide a written description of all submissions.

66 members of Cheshire CI's HONOR program submitted testimony **in support** of this legislation.

An additional **15** pieces of testimony were submitted citing support for **increased mental health resources** in the state's corrections institutions.

An additional **9** pieces of testimony were submitted citing support for **general prison reform**.

An additional **6** pieces of testimony were submitted citing **personal experiences**.

An additional 3 pieces of testimony were submitted in **general support**.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Griffin Olshan

Date: April 24, 2025