

Government Oversight Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5474 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF MEDICAL CARE FOR PERSONS WHO ARE INCARCERATED AT THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/10/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep Dathan

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the Department of Correction to expand and update its inmate health care services plan by incorporating measures such as pursuing accreditation from a national organization approved by Department of Public Health, implementing an electronic medication tracking system to ensure timely administration and alerts for missed doses, allowing inmates to request medical care electronically in addition to written requests, and assisting eligible inmates in applying for Medicaid prior to release. It also mandates annual reporting to legislative committees beginning by December 31, 2026, including detailed data on prescribed medications and delays, the timeliness and completion of initial health assessments, inmate medical care requests and response times, and the number and investigation timelines of adverse medical outcomes.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

Adds reference to physician assistants in the definitions for mental health care provider and mental health therapist, in addition to deleting the Correction Medical Deputy Ombudsman.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Andrea Barton Reeves, Commissioner, Department of Social Services:](#)

Commissioner Barton Reeves submitted general comments on this bill, stating that DSS currently works with the Department of Correction to assist eligible individuals with applying for and activating Medicaid prior to release from incarceration and will continue collaborating to ensure eligible individuals leave incarceration with active coverage.

Daniel Karpowitz, Undersecretary of the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division, Office of Policy and Management: Mr. Karpowitz submitted general comments stating that the administration is pursuing a new approach to medical care for incarcerated individuals focused on improving health outcomes, continuity of care, and oversight. He described ongoing efforts including clinical care improvements, interagency coordination, expanded Medicaid-related services, and exploring new oversight and evaluation structures for correctional health care.

DeVaughn L. Ward, Correction Ombudsman: Ombudsman Ward submitted testimony supporting the intent of this bill to improve oversight and transparency of medical care in correctional facilities but recommended several changes. He argued the bill should focus on enforceable standards, stronger accountability, improved tracking systems for medical requests, and clearer reporting requirements rather than simply requiring additional planning documents.

John R. DelBarba, Assistant Legal Counsel, Office of the Chief Public Defender: Mr. DelBarba submitted testimony supporting this bill, stating it would require the Department of Correction to update its medical care plan and provide annual reporting, while also creating a Correction Medical Deputy Ombuds to assist eligible incarcerated individuals with Medicaid enrollment prior to release.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

State Representative, Renee LaMark Muir: Representative LaMark Muir submitted testimony in support of this bill, stating it would improve oversight of medical and mental health care in correctional facilities by requiring updated health care plans and annual reporting. She noted ongoing issues such as delays in treatment, staffing shortages, and inadequate oversight, and argued stronger accountability and improved care systems are needed to protect incarcerated individuals and improve outcomes.

Sarah Eagan, Executive Director, Center for Children's Advocacy: Ms. Eagan submitted supporting testimony, explaining the bill would strengthen oversight and accountability of medical care in Department of Correction facilities. She emphasized the need for adequate mental and behavioral health services, particularly for incarcerated youth, and recommended improvements to staffing, access to care, and reporting requirements.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU of Connecticut: Ms. Zaccagnino submitted testimony in support of this bill, stating it would strengthen oversight and accountability of medical care in correctional facilities. She noted it would require updated health care planning and reporting and help ensure incarcerated individuals receive adequate medical and mental health services.

Barbra Fair Director, Stop Solitary CT: Ms. Fair submitted general comments, stating they support improving medical and mental health oversight for incarcerated individuals but questioned whether creating a deputy medical ombuds would effectively address the issue. They argued stronger oversight and staffing standards are needed instead.

Ann Percival, Middletown Resident: Ms. Percival testified in support of the bill, stating the bill would improve oversight of medical care for incarcerated individuals and assist with Medicaid enrollment prior to release.

Mark Ambrose: Mr. Ambrose supports this bill which aims to improve oversight of medical care in Connecticut prisons. He supports increased transparency through annual facility reports and the creation of a Medical Deputy Ombuds to help individuals access Medicaid before release. He states that systemic issues, including delayed treatment, lack of timely medical attention, and decision making are influenced by cost rather than need. He emphasizes that poor medical care is a widespread problem in the facility and urges action to address it.

Jonathan Carney: Mr. Carney has been incarcerated for nearly 24 years, supports a bill to increase oversight of mental health care in Connecticut prisons. in prison. Mr. Carney argues that mental health care in the correctional system is inadequate and treated as secondary to incarceration, often limited to medication and minimal therapeutic support. He cites broader data showing a large portion of the prison population has mental health disorders, contradicting the idea that such issues are merely “incidental.” He urges passage of the bill, saying it would improve oversight and offer hope for meaningful mental health treatment for incarcerated individuals.

Alicia Strong: Co-Director, New Britain Racial Justice Coalition: Ms. Strong expresses strong support for H.B. 5474, which seeks to improve oversight of medical care in Connecticut prisons. Her organization’s work with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, highlights ongoing issues such as delays in care, limited access to specialists, medication interruptions, and lack of transparency across facilities. She emphasizes that because incarcerated people rely entirely on the state for healthcare, the state has a responsibility to ensure timely and adequate treatment. She argues that the bill would strengthen oversight and accountability, reduce preventable harm, and benefit not only incarcerated individuals but also their families and communities. She urges the committee to pass the legislation.

Victor Gonzalez: Mr. Gonzalez is incarcerated at Osborn Correctional Facility, expresses support for H.B. 5474, which aims to improve oversight of prison healthcare. He describes widespread problems with delayed and inadequate medical care, including unanswered requests, long wait times, and repeated charges for visits without receiving proper treatment. Mr. Gonzalez says that stronger oversight and accountability are needed to ensure timely and effective care. He also states the importance of addressing healthcare needs before release, noting that untreated conditions make reintegration into society more difficult. He supports creating a medical ombudsman and improving access to coverage, saying these changes would benefit both incarcerated individuals and their communities.

Luis Velez: Mr. Velez supports HB 5474 to improve prison medical care by creating stronger oversight and accountability. He states that incarcerated people have a constitutional right to adequate medical treatment, but in practice, serious health needs are often ignored. Mr. Velez shares that he suffered a fractured and dislocated ankle that required surgery, we has gone seven months without follow-up care, despite repeated requests. He describes this lack of treatment as deliberate indifference, and he fears permanent damage. The main proposal is to establish an independent medical oversight system such as a medical ombudsman to

ensure transparency and hold prison medical staff accountable. Mr. Velez believes this would lead to better care for inmates and supports HB 5474 that will address systemic failures in Connecticut's prison healthcare system.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None

**Reported by: Clerk- Greg Wolff
Assistant Clerk Michael Hamann**

Date: 3/19/26