

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-476 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING VISITATION POLICIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION AND THE TRANSFER OF FUNDS HELD IN TRUST BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION TO PERSONS WHO WERE FORMERLY

Title: INCARCERATED.

Vote Date: 3/24/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/18/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the Department of Correction to give inmates who are being released from incarceration a choice between cash, check, and release card and prohibits the Department of Correction and any third-party contractor from charging the previously incarcerated individual any fees for the use of the release card when that option is chosen.

When an inmate is released from prison in Connecticut, the Department of Correction must provide the inmate with any money owed to them: that is, money they had on them when arrested, money sent by families and friends, and money earned in prison. Historically, the Department of Correction provided released inmates with these funds in cash. Over the last decade, however, release cards—prepaid debit cards used by correctional facilities to return money to incarcerated individuals—have become prominent. Our Department of Correction contracts with firms like JPay to manage inmate money transfers and accounts -- issuing release cards when an inmate is released from prison.

The problem with the release cards is that they carry various fees: ATM withdrawal fees, monthly maintenance fees, inactivity fees, and even balance inquiry fees. These excessive, unnecessary fees quickly drain the funds contained in these release cards, at a time when those who were previously incarcerated need financial assistance the most.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language creates a definition for “prepaid device”, a term used for various ways of making a disbursement of trust fund account funds owed to a person who has been released from incarceration.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Department of Correction, State of Connecticut: It testified in support of SB 476 because the bill establishes in-person visitation thresholds and procedures for disbursing inmate trust funds upon release. The Department states that increased visitation supports rehabilitation, mental health, and successful reentry by maintaining family and community connections. It also identifies operational and fiscal concerns, including staffing needs, safety requirements, pending account charges, and challenges related to disbursing funds, and recommends amendments to address these issues while maintaining institutional safety.

DeVaughn L. Ward, Correction Ombuds, State of Connecticut: He testified in support because visitation promotes institutional stability, rehabilitation, and successful reentry. He recommends extending visitation protections to individuals classified under Security Risk Group (SRG) status to ensure equitable access.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Anonymous 770: Testimony without attribution was submitted in support because they believe changes are needed in the justice system, particularly regarding visitation policies and the transfer of funds held in trust to formerly incarcerated individuals.

Barbara Fair, Director, Stop Solitary CT: She testified in support because SB 476 improves visitation policies and ensures that funds held in trust are returned to formerly incarcerated individuals. She supports three in-person visits per week but notes that lockdown practices must be addressed for the policy to be effective.

Connecticut Children with Incarcerated Parents Initiative (CTCIP), Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy: They testified in support because the bill strengthens in-person visitation and ensures communication services supplement rather than replace visits. They emphasize the importance of maintaining parent-child relationships and addressing barriers such as canceled visits, staffing shortages, and infrastructure challenges.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ACLU-CT: She testified in support because the bill establishes minimum visitation and ensures proper disbursement of inmate trust funds. She emphasizes the role of family connections in rehabilitation and supports extending protections to individuals with SRG status.

Alex Brown, MSW Student, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness: She testified in support because increased visitation supports meaningful human connection, emotional well-being, and successful reentry. She highlighted the personal impact of consistent family visits during incarceration.

Senate Democratic Caucus (Sens. Martin Looney, Jan Hochadel, Martha Marx, Ceci Maher, Julie Kushner, Herron Gaston): They testified in support because the bill establishes a minimum of three in-person visits per week and ensures fair disbursement of inmate trust funds. They state that visitation improves health outcomes, reduces recidivism, and supports successful reentry, and that the bill prevents the use of fee-based release cards.

Senator Bob Duff, 25th District: He testified in support because the bill guarantees a minimum of three in-person visits per week for incarcerated individuals, preserving family connections and supporting successful reentry. He also supports provisions requiring the fair return of inmate trust funds upon release and raises concerns about fee-based release cards that reduce individuals' funds. He recommends allowing individuals to receive their funds by cash or check to avoid such fees.

Prabhakar Patel: He testified in support because individuals, particularly young people, should be given opportunities to learn from mistakes and reintegrate into society.

Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy & Division Advisor, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance: She testified in support because the bill enhances visitation and ensures timely disbursement of inmate trust funds, which supports reentry. She notes that access to funds is critical for basic needs and recommends allowing disbursement by cash or check to avoid fees.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Nicholas Buckland, Executive Board Member, AFSCME Local 387: He testified in opposition on behalf of AFSCME Locals 387 and 391 because staffing shortages and operational constraints make increased visitation unsafe. He emphasized risks related to insufficient staffing and infrastructure limitations.

Ashley Collins, Chief Steward, AFSCME Local 391: She testified in opposition because the bill expands visitation and movement without increasing staffing or resources. She states this creates additional security risks and operational burdens on staff.

Thomas Donahue, Correctional Officer and Union Steward, AFSCME Local 1565: He testified in opposition because requiring three visits per week would create scheduling conflicts, strain staffing, and increase safety risks due to greater inmate movement.

Miles LaFemina, Executive Board Member, AFSCME Council 4, Local 1565: He testified in opposition because the bill limits operational flexibility during staffing shortages and emergencies. He states that increased visitation requirements could divert staff from critical security functions and increase safety risks.

Reported by: Trevor Ellis

Date: March 27, 2026