

**TO: General Assembly Judiciary Committee**  
**RE: Public Hearing on Criminal Justice Reforms -**  
**Investing in the Education & Vocational Workforce**  
**DATE: November 27, 2007**

Chairman Lawlor, Chairman McDonald, and members of the Judiciary Committee;

I am Ann Francisco and I am a Pupil Services Specialist with the Department of Correction, where I have invested nearly 15 years of public service. I split my workweek between Garner CI and Manson Youth Institution, and I'm responsible for assessment, counseling and coordinating special education requirements for the inmate student population.

I am also a union steward in CSEA/SEIU Local 2001's P3-B Bargaining Unit, and I am here today to speak on behalf of my fellow members. We believe the solution for safer communities across Connecticut is not just building more facilities, but investing in quality educational and vocational services for the inmates who will eventually be released back into our communities.

Today, only a small fraction of the inmates in our correctional facilities have access to educational opportunities. Up to three-quarters of inmates receive no occupational training or educational development while incarcerated. At Garner, I often see inmates who want and would benefit from job training, developing a skill, or earning their high school diploma. But too many are unable to do so because of a lack of resources and staff to provide the needed services.

Today, we focus on providing training and education primarily to those inmates the DOC is mandated to, such as youth under the age of 21. The opportunities for inmates that are not required to receive services are far more limited.

Today, we are at a crossroads. It appears that public and official opinion has concluded that for the sake of public safety, Connecticut will be facing larger prison populations and longer stays for those incarcerated.

If this is to be the future, I believe it would be wise to improve educational and vocational services to the inmate population. Specifically, to achieve this, I suggest we double our investment in training services.

Today, the DOC has approximately 260 State school teachers and pupil services specialists. We need to double this number for three specific reasons:

1). ***To improve public safety in our communities:***

The vast majority of inmates will be released at some point in time. We believe that one of our goals is to prepare the incarcerated so they can be productive members of society when they return to our communities.

2). ***To improve economic growth in our neighborhoods:***

We believe that with social, educational, and occupational skills developed while incarcerated, inmates can re-assimilate into the workforce more smoothly and can be more productive when they return to society.

3). ***To improve discipline and security in our facilities:***

I believe we can create an environment where the incarcerated see education as a reward for good behavior. The old saying about idle hands being the devil's workshop is never more accurate than in the context of a correctional facility.

I believe that if we are going to make system-wide changes in how we handle our growing inmate population, we cannot ignore the need to invest in the educational and vocational workforce in the DOC.

And I believe the attainment of a real education, the development of critical social skills, and the realization of valuable vocational skills can – and should – be assessed, along with other criteria, before making the critical decision to return an inmate to the community.

That is where your Committee can play a role; by recommending legislation to empower the DOC to achieve the workforce levels needed to implement and assess the kind of performance-based outcome that we hope will make our communities safer.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my values and beliefs on this critical matter.

**Ann Francisco**

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