

Good afternoon Chairman Lawlor, Chairman McDonald and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is David Moffa and I am a state correction officer and acting president of Local 387 of Council 4 AFSCME, representing correctional employees of Connecticut. Also here today are Jon Pepe, president of Local 391, and Luke Leone, president of Local 1565.

Thank you for holding this public hearing on legislative proposals concerning correctional staffing and facilities, sentencing and parole. Our union is very concerned about overcrowding conditions in state correctional facilities. The state news media has widely reported on the extreme overcrowding of our area correctional facilities, lately.

Such overcrowding is inherently dangerous. We ask for your help in alleviating the overcrowding. It was detailed on a recent legislative tour of the Willard/Cybulski facility, that there are up to 30 inmates assigned to one toilet. There are inmates crammed into areas that should be used for teaching and recreation. Hygiene suffers. The danger of infections such as the MRSA virus and drug resistant tuberculosis, both have which been found in state correctional facilities, increases. Tension increases.

There was a serious fight at the Carl Robinson facility in Enfield last week. You may be aware that this facility was the site of serious rioting in the early 1990s. Two inmates were killed, many correction officers were injured and millions of dollars of state property was destroyed in that rioting.

We ask for your help in securing more posts to adequately man the state's correctional facilities. Our union submits to you a report prepared by the state legislature's nonpartisan Program Review and Investigations Committee staff. This report, completed in December of 2003, found that front line correction positions are more than 20% understaffed, which translates into 700 front line public safety positions. I assure you that staffing has not gotten any better since this report was written. In fact, the only step that the administration seems to have taken as a result of this report is to change the "shift relief" factor down to make it appear on paper as though we are more well-staffed.

Our union also has concerns about the large number of inmates with mental illness. We urge that the governor and legislature take steps to make sure that the needs of inmates with mental health problems be better addressed, as well as the needs of correction staff who have to deal with them.

Our members take their duty to Connecticut's citizens very seriously. We strive to be the best correctional staff in the country and provide state residents with the best of protection. We also strive to make our correctional facilities as safe as reasonably possible for both staff and inmates. We appreciate your taking an interest in doing the same. We would be happy to answer any questions.

# Digest

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## CORRECTION OFFICER STAFFING

The objective of this study, begun in June 2003, was to determine if the current Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC) custodial staffing levels are sufficient for the safe and efficient management of the state's prison population. During the study, the following conclusions were reached.

- \* • The Department of Correction is about 700 correction officers short of the number needed to fully staff the department's custody staffing plan. The shortage is covered almost exclusively by the use of overtime.
- There is no objective method for setting an overall custody staff level or inmate to custody staff ratio due to facility variation, making doing it by statute inadvisable.
- There is significant variation among the Department of Correction's facilities in terms of the number of inmates per custody officer and measures of safety.
- The Department of Correction's procedures for determining staffing needs are consistent with nationally recognized standards.
- Correction officers are generally distrustful of the Department of Correction's incident data and the ability of the department to determine the number of custody staff needed to assure safety.
- Correction officers generally hold the belief prison safety is better now than in the mid-90s, but not safe enough.
- There is no objective method for establishing an acceptable level of safety for either the entire department or individual facilities.
- There is inadequate data on the relationship between staff injuries as measured by workers' compensation claims and overtime.

## Recommendations

1. An overall custody staff level or inmate to custody staff ratio should not be set in statute.
2. Changes in the number of custody staff at the Department of Correction should be based on changes in objective measures of prison safety including but not limited to disciplinary reports, inmate on staff assaults, inmate on inmate assaults, and the security risk level of the inmate population being supervised.

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12/2003 Report on  
Correction Officer Staffing