

Office of the Correction Ombuds
55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105

August 29, 2025

To: Members of the Correction Advisory Committee
From: DeVaughn L. Ward, Esq., Connecticut Correction Ombuds
Re: Quarterly Report – June 13, 2025 through August 29, 2025

1) Executive Summary

Since the last semi-annual meeting on June 13, 2025, the Office of the Correction Ombuds (OCO) has advanced several foundational initiatives, including adoption of a triage policy, stakeholder engagement, and procurement of a case management system. Despite this progress, significant staffing delays continue to limit the Office's capacity to fully implement the statutory duties established under Public Act 21-161, particularly the Health Services Report due December 1, 2025.

2) Policy & Operational Developments

- Triage Policy: Finalized and implemented a standardized process for intake, prioritization, and assignment of complaints.
- Case Management System: Selected and received OPM approval for CMTS (Case Management Tracking Software), a platform used by multiple correctional oversight entities nationwide. Delivery, onboarding, and implementation remain on track for October 2025.

3) Staffing & Capacity

- Authorized Positions: 5 total.
- Posted: *Administrative Assistant* and *Clerk Typist* (posting closes September 3, 2025).
- Not Yet Posted: *Associate Ombuds*; *Assistant Ombuds (Health Services)*; *Assistant Ombuds (Investigator)*.
- Challenges: Staffing delays have contributed to a backlog of 388 complaints. To date, 217 complaints have received responses, but tracking and reporting remain difficult without CMTS in place. The Office will likely be unable to meet the December 1, 2025 Health Services Report deadline without prompt hiring.

Projected Impact of Pending Hires

- With one Assistant Ombuds (Investigator) and one Clerk Typist dedicated to intake and complaint processing, the OCO estimates the backlog could be reduced by 30–40% within six months and by 50–60% within nine to twelve months, depending on complaint volume and complexity.

- Without these hires, backlog growth will continue, heightening risks to compliance and timely reporting.

4) Complaints & Investigations

- Active Investigations: 9 total — 4 individual cases and 5 systemic matters.
- Complaint Status: To date, 217 complaints have been processed, meaning they have received a response from the office.
- Backlog: Approximately 388 pending complaints remain unopened and untriaged. CMTS implementation in October will enable more accurate and timely tracking.

5) Site Visits & Monitoring

- Conducted 14 facility visits since June 13, 2025, including Osborn, Bridgeport, York, Garner, MacDougall-Walker, and Hartford. Many were unannounced, consistent with new statutory authority.
- Met twice with individuals on hunger strike at Cheshire CI to assess conditions and health concerns.
- Body Scanners: Procurement for York CI and Manson CI has been completed; implementation at both facilities is anticipated in October 2025.

6) Stakeholder Engagement & Partnerships

- Stakeholder Meetings: Convened multi-organization sessions on July 1–2, 2025.
- Governor & OPM Engagement: Met with the Governor's Office and the OPM Undersecretary during this reporting period to address staffing and implementation challenges.
- Internship Program: Hosted two New England Law interns this summer, who conducted research on investigations and Freedom of Information (FOI) processes. Plans are underway to host two UConn School of Law students in Spring 2026.
- Community Engagement: The next Community Listening Session will be held September 25, 2025 at the OCO office. Planning is underway for a public town hall in Fall 2025.

7) Public Advocacy

- Testimony: Submitted testimony in support of releasing video footage in the J 'Allen Jones case (Garner CI, 2018, ruled a homicide).
- Op-Ed: Published "*The CT Prison Video AG Tong Doesn't Want You to See*", emphasizing the urgent need for transparency and accountability in correctional oversight.

8) Budget & Resources

- FY 2025–26 Appropriation: \$790,799 beginning July 1, 2025.

- Resource Needs: While funding is available, delays in posting and filling the three unstaffed positions remain the primary barrier to reducing the complaint backlog and producing the required Health Services Report on time.

9) Requests of the Committee

- Expedited Staffing: Support efforts to ensure timely DAS/OPM approval and posting of the three unfilled positions: *Associate Ombuds*, *Assistant Ombuds (Health Services)*, and *Assistant Ombuds (Investigator)*.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support as we work to strengthen independent oversight and advance transparency within Connecticut's correctional system. I look forward to discussing these updates in detail at the next Correction Advisory Committee meeting on December 11, 2025.

Respectfully,

DeVaughn L. Ward, Esq.
Connecticut Correction Ombuds

