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Armando Cruz, Radiologic Technologist,
Department of Corrections
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations committee. My name is Armando Cruz and I am a Radiologic Technologist for the Dept. of Corrections working in several jails and prisons.

Tonight, if I may, I will be speaking as an 1199 Delegate serving for the past 15 years. I have been working in Corrections for 24 plus years and I have encountered, seen, and been told by many of my co-workers of the staffing issues statewide. In providing professional and basic health care to the inmate population, my co-workers and I have given an extraordinary amount of time and effort in the care of inmates. The staffing crisis that the Department of Corrections has inherited not only affects my co-workers but also the wards of the state, known as the inmate population.

As a whole, our professional staff of approximately 675 or so is only a band-aid on a hemorrhaging issue that should be resolved or fixed with adequate staff. Let me give you an example we all have experienced, you walk into a clinic or hospital and asked for medical or mental health care. You are told that you're placed on a waitlist and will be called when it's your turn. Naturally, you ask how long will that be? The response is 2-3 weeks. How would you feel? That's what inmates are encountering.

I am going to go back to my timeline of my employment for the State of Connecticut. When I first started in 1996, as a member of the Department of Corrections, there was approximately 1,100 health care professionals in mental health and medical for approximately 15,000 inmates. In my opinion, health services for the inmate were done in a timely fashion. Fast forwarding to about the year 2008 when UConn Health Center was at the helm of overseeing the care of 19,800 inmates, allegedly due to the budget crisis, they dwindled our staffing to 750. This was the beginning of the downfall of the care that we have yet to recover from.

That brings us to the present staffing level of today, which is roughly 675 for 17,000 inmates. It is not feasible to perform all the duties that have to be provided and completed in a correctional atmosphere with these numbers, we have been told as a whole to do more with less, which we have. With the current numbers of staff, the state and the public have seen an increase in legal issues in many cases that could have been prevented.

I stand here before you as a professional and proud state employee, to ask you to allocate the funding that this department direly needs.

Thank you