



SEIU Healthcare
United for Quality Care

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Lydia Rostkowski, Nursing Supervisor
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee. My name is Lydia Rostkowski and I am from East Hartford. I am a Registered Nurse, currently employed as a Supervising Nurse at MacDougall-Walker CI in Suffield and have been employed as a Correctional Nurse for 11.5 years.

First, I would like to thank you all for your attention to inmate healthcare and the appropriation of funds in last year's budget to the Department of Correction, specifically as it applies to Inmate Health Services. Many steps have been taken to improve Health Services in the past year, specifically the effort made to address the severe staffing shortages within our facilities. However, I am present tonight to further advocate for funding inmate health services, for safe patient care, and for the needs of correctional Health Services staff.

Correctional Nursing and working within the confines of a prison is different from other kinds of Nursing. We are working in a stringent environment primarily focused on Safety and Security, while trying to provide the best possible care to a diverse patient population who historically have suffered from a host of health disparities. Staff must really hone and strengthen their clinical assessment skills, prioritize problems and seek solutions while constantly being aware of Safety and Security concerns. Additionally, Correctional nursing is very autonomous in nature, so development of core skills for independent practice is crucial. These educational needs are absolutely crucial and necessary for staff.

My facility, MacDougall-Walker CI is considered one of the largest facilities in New England, housing nearly 2000 inmates between 2 buildings, all Security Level 4 and 5 inmates. We have a 24 bed infirmary and provide services for all of the sentenced Dialysis patients in the state. Our nurses pass medications to approximately 300+ inmates in the morning and 400+ in the evening along with treating approximately 130 Diabetics, monitoring their blood sugar and administering Insulin injections to them 2-3 times a day. Nurses also have a variety of scheduled treatments and dressing changes to tend to, plus routine sick call or PromptCare visits along with being responsible for Emergency Code Response for some known medical issues such as seizures, low blood sugars or inmates fighting, or possibly something unknown such as an inmate found unresponsive, having suffered a cardiac event, needing CPR or a having overdosed on unknown drugs and needing to be revived with Narcan.

Currently within the state of CT and across the country, the inmate population is aging and stressed with an already taxed system with increased health care costs. Many of these inmates are afflicted with chronic diseases such as Diabetes, Hypertension, and Chronic Kidney Disease, as well as a variety of Infectious diseases such as HIV or Hepatitis. Along with the health issues, we are encountering the issues of where to house the handicapped and aging population, and providing care to those that need increased assistance with their activities of daily living.

Our goal as health care providers is to care for all of the inmates with their varied and often complex medical needs. Increased staffing allows for nurses to see more inmates daily and

assures optimal nurse to patient ratios, ensuring timely and appropriate care along with patient teaching. Please continue to fully fund DOC healthcare so that our staff can continue to ensure that the highest quality care is being provided to our inmate population.