

Senators Lopes & Cicarella, Representatives McGee & Polletta and the members of the Housing Committee, I am Angel Quiros, Commissioner of Correction and I am submitting testimony on Senate Bill 875 which addresses homelessness among those released by the Department.

One of the top priorities of the Department of Correction (DOC) is to assist inmates in successfully transitioning back into the community. Housing is a major challenge for many inmates being released. During the current COVID pandemic, DOC has worked aggressively in cooperation with the CT Coalition to End Homelessness, and with additional federal funds, to significantly reduce the number of inmates who lack housing when released. As part of our Reentry Housing Assistance Program, the Department already uses the web-based tracker SmartSheets which the bill references to find housing for Returning Citizens. DOC does want to continue this successful partnership in the future and involve the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch as well.

Obviously, assessing every inmate for their housing needs/homelessness risk will be very labor-intensive, time-consuming, and expensive given the large number of people who come in and out of DOC on an annual basis. Unfortunately, housing is so unpredictable and unstable for many offenders that even a solid housing plan can fall apart at the last minute. So it is uncertain how much such extensive assessments will reduce the problem of homelessness among Returning Citizens.

DOC is committed to working with this Committee, its state agency and non-profit partners to continue to reduce homelessness among Returning Citizens within the State Budget that will be adopted and signed into law by Governor Lamont.

I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important bill and would be happy to work with the Committee as this bill moves through the process.