



Testimony of Raquel Leiva
Member of Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice
Testimony for the Judicial Committee Public Hearing
SB 987: An Act Concerning Reinvestment of Savings Achieved Through a
Reduction In Correctional Facility Population Into Reentry and
Community-Based Services and Programs,
March 10th, 2021

My name is Raquel Leiva, I am a member of the Katal Center for Equity, Health and Justice. I'm grateful for the opportunity to testify before the Judiciary Committee in support of SB 987, which relates to the reinvestment of money saved from the closure of Northern Correctional Institution to reentry and community-based services.

The closing of Northern Correctional Institution has offered an opportunity to reinvest resources to the communities in Connecticut, particularly Black and brown communities, which have been ravaged by the carceral system. The only thing we need to ensure is that the funds from this bill go directly from Northern CI, to the General Fund, and then into our communities.

Let us not forget that despite the curtailing of their rights to freedom, incarcerated people are still citizens. These individuals are parents, aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, and children of other Connecticut citizens. Many of them are former wage-earners facing new barriers and discrimination in returning to the workforce following serving time in prison. The available funds would best serve the community with a plan for prevention, rehabilitation and reformation, rather than allowing the Department of Correction to maintain a large budget that perpetuate punitive practices, like the ones that have persisted at Northern Correctional Institution. I know this first hand as I have a loved one in the DOC.

A provision I strongly support is for funds to be appropriated to Inmate Medical Services. My husband would be a direct recipient of the benefits that will come from investing funds into these services. My husband is incarcerated at McDougall-Walker and has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 outbreak in Connecticut prisons. Aside from the heightened need for medical competency due to the pandemic there is a clear need for a standard of care in the DOC for incarcerated people. Him and others

should not have to worry about their lives due to the lack of medical personnel and services while being incarcerated.

At the Katal Center, we are engaged in a new campaign called #CutShutINVEST. This campaign is designed to ensure that Connecticut:

- **Cut** the number of people incarcerated in jails and prisons. Cut the number of people on probation and parole;
- **Shut** prisons down;
- **Invest** in the communities most harmed by systemic racism and mass incarceration, into housing, healthcare, education, jobs, and more.

In the spirit of Katal's call to Cut, Shut and Invest, available funds should be directed towards supporting and empowering individuals returning from incarceration and looking to make fruitful contributions in society. We know that investing in affordable housing, educational & vocational training programs, and behavioral health programs help people stay in the community, stay connected to family and friends, and overall keep people and communities safe. The services that this bill provides are absolutely needed, and we need to ensure that we go farther to really invest in our communities.

Thank you for your time,

Raquel Leiva