

Testimony of Kevnesha Boyd, Hamden, CT
Before the Judiciary Appropriations Committee
Regarding The PROTECT Act
H.B. 6439 (COMM) An Act Concerning THE State Budget for The Biennium Ending June
13,2023 and Making Appropriations Therefore.
February 21, 2021

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you tonight. My name is Kevnesha Boyd, I live in Hamden and I am a Board member of Stop Solitary CT. As a former mental health counselor for the Department of Correction, I understand the importance of external oversight and believe that the legislature should appropriate funds to establish an independent oversight body for the Department of Correction. Our organization is supporting the Judiciary Committee's PROTECT Act, which provides an effective model for correctional oversight by creating an Office of Corrections Ombuds under the Office of Government Accountability.

Working for DOC was my dream job until it started to compromise my health. The poor mental health treatment, witnessing; physical & verbal abuse, and deprivation of basic human rights began to traumatize me. What ultimately lead to my resignation from the department was that, in March 2019, Carl Robbie Talbot was found dead in chains in solitary confinement. Rather than a clinical alternative, he received punitive punishment. DOC does not currently offer adequate rehabilitative services, treatment and or pro social programming, to address the true needs of incarcerated people.

Moreover, with no external oversight, I witnessed firsthand how staff misconduct and grievances are mishandled on several occasions. Reports filed on my behalf have never been addressed through my resignation. Currently there is no safe and private process to report misconduct and or grievances from incarcerated people. In an environment that is responsible for the health and well- being for thousands of people, it's imperative that there be external accountability. CT is one of 13 states with no form of meaningful oversight in the country, leaving us far behind.

The PROTECT Act provides legislative means to implement real change for correctional staff and incarcerated people. The PROTECT Act will save CT money, and create a more rehabilitative institution and safer communities for everyone.

I urge you to appropriate funds to support DOC oversight by funding an independent Office of Corrections Ombuds, and in doing so, protect the lives of incarcerated people, as well as DOC staff like myself and their families across the state.