



**Testimony of TCherell Banks**  
**Member of Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice**  
**Testimony for the Appropriations Committee Public Hearing on the**  
**Governor's Proposed Budget for Judicial and Corrections**  
**HB 6439**  
**February 26th, 2021**

Good evening Rep. Walker, Sen. Osten, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is TCherell Banks, and I am a Member of the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of you for this very important hearing. I'm here to talk about the Governor's Proposed Budget for Judicial and Corrections, HB 6439.

I want to start by sharing a traditional greeting passed between Masi warriors, which is "how are the children?" I start here because Connecticut disproportionately detains Black and brown children at higher rates than their white counterparts. This is also true for the adults they become, and Black and brown adults are incarcerated at rates significantly higher than their white counterparts. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, Black and Latinx people make up 23% of the general population in Connecticut, yet make up 70% of the incarcerated population.

When Masi warriors ask "how are the children?", the answer to that question is an indicator of how the adult population will thrive. Taking a hard look at Connecticut and its system of incarceration for Black and brown youth, we know that it is an indicator of a system that will continue to criminalize and lock them up as adults.

In looking over the proposed budget for the Department of Corrections (DOC), I can see that there are **zero changes** in the dollars, despite the fact that there will be facility closures in the coming year. This is alarming to me as a mother, and as a Community Leader. I work with young people and their families who struggle to come up with bond money in case their loved one is incarcerated. I'm friends with people who struggle for basic human rights in halfway houses, many run by the DOC, that cause significant trauma and damage to our communities. I've seen the assembly line that feeds the school-to-prison pipeline as School Resources Officers (SRO's) target youth of color in our schools, especially in areas like Hartford where I am. To allow the DOC to keep their million dollar budget after we have seen the numerous medical malpractice lawsuits over the years, witnessed the brutality of Corrections Officers at Northern and other facilities, and watched as they took away showers for incarcerated people sick with COVID-19 is deplorable.



Governor Lamont states that he has a commitment to equity. In this proposed budget, there is no commitment to equity, and we cannot allow the DOC to continue to operate with as much funding without accountability. We must interrupt and break down the pathways and forces that continue to push our children, and adults, into the justice system. Connecticut routinely allows funding to be cut for education, mental health services, housing services, and more, yet corrections remain intact. Numerous studies have shown that rehabilitation begins and ends in the community, and this needs to be kept in mind as we look at this budget for the DOC.

At Katal, we are engaged in a new campaign called #CutShutINVEST. The 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** prison down;
- **Invest** in the communities most harmed by systemic racism and mass incarceration, into housing, healthcare, education, jobs, and more.

As we look at this proposed budget, I ask members of the committee to reflect on our campaign objectives. The CT Department of Correction needs a significant overhaul in its budget, and its practices. Without significant changes, our communities will only be further harmed by mass incarceration and mass criminalization.

Thank you for your time,  
TCherell Banks, Katal Member & Kingian Nonviolence Trainer