

Date: February 26, 2021 Committee: Appropriations Bill Title: H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR. Co-Chairs: Senator Osten, Representative Walker

Talking points that are relevant by department:

Judicial Branch: Court Support Services Division • Our current system disproportionately harms Black and Brown youth. Connecticut incarcerates youth of color at significantly higher rates than it does white youth. This is unacceptable. o Source 1 o Source 2 • Over the last few years, the juvenile justice and related systems (education, children's mental health, child welfare, prevention and diversion) have faced deep cuts and lack of proactive investment. This is problematic because incarceration cannot be the only option for young people in our communities. • The easy narrative is to ONLY hold young people accountable. The true, harder narrative, is to hold youth accountable for their part AND hold ourselves and those of you who create and vote to pass budgets accountable for not ensuring the system created to address youth behavior gets what it needs to fulfill its mission. • Governor Lamont's budget does not make the system whole- more funding is needed for intensive, community based, wrap around services for young people and their families. When the system isn't whole, children and communities are not whole. Without the right services, more kids are funneled into detention or out of home placements. Examples of programs that are proven to work with youth can be found on page 2, here. • Locking up youth is typically costly and ineffective. Data shows that youth who are detained or incarcerated may be more likely to reoffend than their peers who aren't, meaning that using detention and incarceration can have the opposite effect that people are hoping for. According to the Judicial Branch of CT, Court Support Services Division, detention costs about \$800 per child per day. In 2018, the average length of a stay in detention was 14 days - that's \$11,200 spent each time we put a child in juvenile detention. In 2020 the average length of a stay in detention was 25 days - if the amount per day is the same, that's \$20,000 spent each time we put a child in juvenile detention. • As well established and effective programs go away, the pressure to go back to frequent detention and incarceration grows. Aside from the moral issues surrounding using detention and incarceration when we know it's not the best way to change youth behavior and disproportionately impacts children of color, the idea that detention and incarceration are somehow cost neutral is flawed.

Department of Corrections • Our current system disproportionately harms Black and Brown youth. Connecticut incarcerates youth of color at significantly higher rates than it does white youth. This is unacceptable. • In addition to committing to closing Northern Correctional Institution, the Governor has committed to closing two more prisons, projecting approximately \$46.9 million in savings. These prison closures are long overdue and well warranted. Governor Lamont's budget does not appropriate these savings to meaningfully protect the lives of incarcerated people. These funds must be reinvested to protect people who are incarcerated and be invested into community programs that work to increase public safety and client success. • Although Northern is scheduled to close, extreme isolation occurs throughout the Department of Corrections

(DOC) and the human rights abuses that occurred at Northern are by no means unique to the facility. • At present, the Connecticut DOC has little to no external oversight, fails to collect meaningful data on isolation, utilizes abusive restraints, and continues to unnecessarily and excessively isolate people. This must end. Funding must be appropriated to DOC to bring in an outside expert to determine how to best operate DOC facilities to keep folks who are incarcerated safe, as well as Correctional Officers.

- DOC must Immediately improve conditions of confinement through policy and practice:
 - o End the use of solitary confinement - no matter what it is called. Limit the time youth can be confined in their cell as a behavioral intervention.
 - o Ban the use of chemical restraints.
 - o Address the educational and mental health needs of youth.
- Governor Lamont's budget provides funds for the Department of Corrections to increase community support services. This is a positive step. More information is needed on what exactly this includes.
- DOC must commit to removing all youth under the age of 18 from adult facilities pre- and post-trial
 - o No child under the age of 18 should be in an adult correctional setting, even if their case is transferred to the adult court. Boys must be removed from Manson Youth Institution and girls from York Correctional Institution (the only prison for women in Connecticut).
 - o Locking up youth in adult prison does not address root issues. According to a recent state audit, the overwhelming majority of transferred boys, and all of the transferred girls, in the adult system during 2019 lived in families previously investigated for child abuse or neglect, often multiple times. The audit found that most boys in the system completed few or no programs while incarcerated. Young people will most likely be unable to change behaviors until their root issues are addressed and taken care of.
- Governor Lamont' budget decreases the amount available for the line item marked inmate medical services. This is problematic and an explanation must be given as to why this deduction was deemed appropriate.

Respectfully,
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