



## State of Connecticut

### DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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### Testimony of Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel, Director JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - MARCH 26, 2025

#### Raised Bill 1543 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

**The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports Raised Bill 1543, An Act Concerning the Department of Correction.** The bill amends several statutes to provide: the assessment and provision of mental health services upon intake into the department, access to “productive programming” for employment, education and vocational training, “palatable and nutritious meals” efficiency allowing an incarcerated person to authorize another access to their medical records, information publicly pertaining to malpractice and neglect claims against the department and the process for filing such a claim, information available to the next of kin, a database of all cases in which the Office of the Attorney General defended. In addition, the bill requires the department to purchase at least 2 body scans, 1 for use at York Correctional Institution and 1 at the John R. Manson Youth Institution in Cheshire.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, incarcerated young adults and adults are routinely subject to strip searches in order to attend school or medical appointments. Additionally, incarcerated individuals are subject to body or invasive cavity searches that are mandated under Department of Correction Administrative Directives and conducted on any inmate before and after a visit with persons from outside the correction facility, *including a legal visit with their attorney*. Body or cavity searches are conducted on sentenced inmates, pre-trial detainees held for any offense including misdemeanors, who cannot afford bond and despite the fact that they are **presumed innocent** under both the federal and state constitutions.

Most alarming is the fact that this practice is used on the **youth** of this state irrespective of gender when incarcerated. And because of the demographics of the correction population, this practice has a substantial **disparate impact on persons of color**.

OCPD thanks the Committee for raising this bill and requests that it act **favorably** on it. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> OCPD submitted testimony in support of *R.B 7186, An Act Requiring A Report Concerning The Use Of Body Scanning Machines And Strip And Cavity Searches In Correctional Facilities* in the Committee on Government Oversight which would require the department to report on the cost of such body scanners.