



**State of Connecticut**  
**DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES**

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**Testimony of John R. DelBarba, Assistant Legal Counsel**

**Judiciary Committee Public Hearing**  
**March 18, 2026**

**Raised Bill No. 5567 - AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH CARE IN THE  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS FACILITIES**

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports *Raised Bill 5567, An Act Concerning Health Care in the Department of Corrections Facilities*, which at a minimum (1) requires the Correction Ombuds to hire a Correction Patient Advocate who has at least five years of senior level health care leadership experience and (A) holds (i) a bachelor's degree in health care administration, business or nursing, and (ii) a master's degree in health care administration, business or nursing, or (B) holds a medical degree, and (2) requires the Correction Ombuds to hire a Correction Mental Health Care Clinician who (A) (i) holds a doctoral degree in clinical psychology, (ii) holds an applicable professional license issued by this state under chapter 383, or (iii) is an advanced practice registered nurse licensed under chapter 378 and 288 specializes in mental health care, and (B) has experience in clinical mental health care, forensic psychology, correctional health or a related field. This act further enacts various other proposals supporting the health and well-being of incarcerated persons including, but not limited to, the reimbursement of student loans of persons working with the Department of Correction as nurses in an effort to maintain appropriate medical services for incarcerated persons.

Public Defenders represent more than 100,000 individuals annually. Based on our statewide representation, a percentage of our clients will unfortunately be incarcerated for various periods of time ranging from days to years. OCPD supports any effort on the part of the Department of Correction and the Correction Ombuds that (1) introduces and adds to its staff an experienced Correction Patient Advocate that improves medical care

**H.B. 5567, An Act Concerning Health Care in the Department of Correction Facilities**

for persons who are incarcerated, (2) further establishes the position of Correction Mental Health Care Clinician to oversee efforts and assist persons who are incarcerated with matters relating to mental health care, including access to services, psychiatric medication management, continuity of care, treatment planning and patient rights, and (3) establishes that the department may not deny any person who is incarcerated access to a health care service or prescription medication based on the inability of such person to pay any portion of a copayment assessed by the department for such service or medication.

This Act (1) establishes medical professional positions within the Office of the Correction Ombuds, (2) develops processes to ensure medications are administered as directed in Department of Correction facilities and other safeguards concerning health care provided to persons who are incarcerated, (3) reimburses student loans of persons working with the Department of Correction as nurses, (4) directs an audit of the nutrition and food services of the department, (5) requires medical history be transmitted to the department as part of a presentencing report, (6) enhances training for correction officers, (7) establishes the Correction Medical and Health Oversight Board, and (8) enacts various other proposals supporting the health and well-being of incarcerated persons.

OCPD supports this Raised Bill and requests that the bill be voted on favorably. Thank you.