



**Office of Chief Public Defender
State of Connecticut**

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**Testimony of Susan O. Storey, Chief Public Defender
Office of Chief Public Defender
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
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***RAISED BILL No. 5569, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CHILD NURSERY FACILITY AT THE
CONNECTICUT CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION, NIAN TIC***

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports passage of ***Raised Bill No. 5569, An Act Establishing a Child Nursery Facility at the Connecticut Correctional Institution, Niantic.*** The Office of Chief Public Defender maintains that this is an opportune time to enact the reforms outlined in the bill to promote the welfare of children of incarcerated parents. The bill presents an option for courts to consider when sentencing pregnant women to a term of incarceration. Passage would indicate that Connecticut lawmakers recognize the wide ranging implications and collateral consequences that incarceration of a pregnant woman has on the individual, the welfare of infants and children, and family stability.

If remaining in the community is not an option for a pregnant defendant, then enactment of ***Raised Bill No. 5569*** provides an opportunity for an infant born to an incarcerated mother to remain with his/her mother in a prison nursery facility. Such a model has been highly successful in other states, i.e. Bedford Hills, New York, and promotes appropriate time for parent - child bonding and parenting classes prior to release. The Office of Chief Public Defender would support placement in such a facility only if community sentencing alternatives for the female defendant and her child were clearly not an option that could be considered by the court.

Connecticut's Sentencing Commission has expressed support and awareness of the importance of maintaining social ties to reduce recidivism. The Commission's 2011 annual report contains a proposal that research be undertaken by the Commission to, "*Study the impact of supportive social ties - including family ties - on recidivism and other indicators of harm and success. Compare social-tie effects of incarcerated vs. non-incarcerated offenders, and trace the granular effects of incarceration on families and other sources of social support. Examine current DOC practices that support or weaken social ties, with a view toward security considerations. Also review the data of the impact of conjugal and full family visits on incarcerated offenders.*"

