

Stop Solitary CT SB 1059 Fiscal Note Briefer

A recent [projection](#) from the Connecticut State Office of Fiscal Analysis estimates that [Senate Bill 1059](#), otherwise known as the PROTECT Act, will cost the State approximately \$18.3 - \$21.4 million in FY 22 and \$18.5 - \$21.7 million in FY23. However, this estimate fails to properly account for current DOC staffing levels—which are at an historic high—and also does not reflect future friendly amendments that proponents intend on introducing. After making appropriate adjustments, **a more accurate fiscal note for SB 1059 would be between \$1.5 and \$1.9 million.**¹ After taking into account the long term cost savings that stem from ending solitary confinement, we project that S.B. 1059 will **save Connecticut approximately \$15.1 million.**²

So what accounts for the dramatically inflated cost of Senate Bill 1059 in the official fiscal note?

1. A free phone call provision that will be eliminated from the bill in a friendly amendment. Eliminating this provision alone will **reduce** the fiscal note by **\$13.5 million dollars**.
2. An inaccurate conclusion that DOC will need to hire new staff. The OFA projects that the DOC will need to hire approximately 44 - 88 new correctional officers in order to meet the bill's requirement that every incarcerated person have at least 8 hours out of cell per day. Eliminating this provision will **reduce** the fiscal note by **\$6.1 - \$6.3 million**. Given current staffing levels, hiring new correctional officers is unnecessary:
 - a. On July 1, 2021, the DOC will close Northern Correctional Institution, the state's sole supermax facility, and will have to relocate the **approximately 123 correctional officers** who are currently at that facility.³
 - b. **DOC staffing ratios are already at an all time high in Connecticut.**⁴ In 1968, DOC had a staff-to-prisoner ratio of 40 to 100; in 1978, 50 to 100; in 1988, 50 to 100; in 1998, 41 to 100; in 2008, 36 to 100; and in 2020, 62 to 100. The current ratio of correctional officers to prisoners is **far higher than the national norm.**⁵ At present there are approximately 38 correctional officers for every 100 prisoners in the Connecticut DOC, tied with the highest officer-to-prisoner ratio in the federal system.⁶
 - c. The incarcerated population is on a continuing downward trend, and the DOC plans to close two more prisons in the coming year. As with the closure of Northern, the DOC will have excess staff as a result of the prison closures.

In sum, the official fiscal note for Senate Bill 1059 drastically overestimates the bill's cost by neglecting key context related to DOC staffing levels and planned amendments. The true cost of the bill is much lower—at most \$1.9 million. In addition, as Stop Solitary CT has noted previously, SB 1059 will provide for significant savings in the long term by ending solitary confinement and implementing effective alternatives.

¹ \$1.9 million accounts for \$1.5 million for an Ombuds plus \$400,000 for free letters for incarcerated people; the most essential expenditure is to fully fund the ombuds.

² Our fiscal impact report released February 2021, [Protecting Lives. Saving Dollars](#), projected approximately 17 million dollars in savings each year from dramatically reducing solitary. These savings are not accounted for in OFA's analysis.

³ The data comes from the Connecticut Department of Correction, *DOC Employees by Facility as of September 2020*, accessed via a FOI Request.

⁴ We make the distinction between “staff” and “correctional officers” in our calculations. At present, DOC employs over 6100 staff, approximately 3400 of which are correctional officers. We do not have longitudinal data on the number of correctional officers, employed by DOC but, from publicly data, available at <https://portal.ct.gov/DOC/Report/Number-of-Authorized-Positions>, the current staff-to-prisoner ratio is the highest in DOC history.

⁵ As of 2016, the average correctional officer to prisoner ratio for U.S. jails was 25 officers per 100 incarcerated people (<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ji16.pdf>). In 2020, no federal correctional institution had an officer-to-prisoner ratio higher than 38 officers per 100 incarcerated people and facilities routinely operated at ratios of 10 officers per 100 incarcerated people. (https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/docs/inmate_to_co_ratio_2020_q2.pdf).

⁶ This ratio is calculated using OFA's estimate for the number of correctional officers currently employed by DOC and the incarcerated population as of April 1st, 2021.