



# The PROTECT Act 2022

An Act Promoting Responsible Oversight, Treatment,  
and Effective Correctional Transparency



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## **Ensures Oversight & Accountability**

Creates a Commission for Correctional Oversight to evaluate the operations of prisons, jails, and halfway houses throughout Connecticut. The Commission will consist of twelve members, including formerly incarcerated people, family members, experts in medicine, mental health and corrections, and representatives from the executive and legislative branches. The Commission will have the authority and responsibility to conduct unscheduled and unrestricted site visits; inspect DOC records; and establish a confidential system to receive feedback from incarcerated people, family members, and DOC personnel, all of whom will be protected from retaliation for cooperating with the Commission. The Commission will publish its findings and hold quarterly meetings to promote a safe, effective, and humane correction system in Connecticut.

## **Stops Extreme Isolation and Promotes Effective Alternatives**

Addresses severe, enduring harms of isolation in Connecticut prisons. Brings Connecticut in compliance with the internationally accepted Nelson Mandela Rules that isolated confinement be used only as a last resort, for the shortest possible term, and never for more than fifteen consecutive days (or twenty days total within any sixty-day period). Provides that all incarcerated people must have at least 7 hours out of cell per day unless isolated confinement is strictly necessary to protect staff and incarcerated people. Ensures minimum wellness standards in isolated confinement, including four hours out of cell and access to programming. Creates alternative rehabilitative measures, including Residential Rehabilitation Units for people with mental illness or other longer-term treatment needs. Ends the misuse of lockdowns, which have become a routine means to evade the governor's executive order, confining incarcerated people to their cells and denying their basic human needs for days or weeks on end. Bans training days as an excuse for lockdowns.

## **Ends Abusive Restraints and Dehumanizing Strip Searches**

Bars chaining and shackling people within locked cells ("in-cell restraints"), a practice used to punish and denigrate incarcerated people, often for symptoms of mental illness. Limits use of restraints to (1) when transporting incarcerated people between units/facilities, (2) as a short-term, emergency response to a substantiated threat of imminent physical harm, or (3) when soft restraints are necessary for emergency medical use under the supervision of health care professionals. Also sets forth strict limits on the use of invasive strip searches, which are commonly used to humiliate and degrade incarcerated people.

## **Protects Social Bonds**

Reaffirms the fundamental importance of maintaining positive social ties to an individual's rehabilitation. Provides at least two social letters per week and restores access to contact visits to loved ones for all incarcerated people except in rare circumstances.

## **Promotes Correctional Officer Wellness**

Requires that the DOC implement training and other strategies to support staff in mitigating trauma and its effects, such as burnout, substance abuse, aggression, and suicide.

## **Promotes Transparency**

Requires public reporting on key indicators within the Connecticut correction system, including prevalence of mental illness, use of force incidents, and availability of education and other programs.