



Legislative Testimony
765 Asylum Avenue, First Floor
Hartford, CT 06105
860-523-9146
www.acluct.org

**Written Testimony Supporting House Resolution 7 and Senate Resolution 5,
Resolution Approving the Settlement Agreement in Robert Barfield, et al. v.
Angel Quiros, in His Official Capacity as Commissioner, Connecticut Department
of Correction**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking Member Kissel, Ranking Member Fishbein, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kelly McConney Moore, and I am the senior policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Resolution 7 and Senate Resolution 5, Resolution Approving the Settlement Agreement in Robert Barfield, et al. v. Angel Quiros, in His Official Capacity as Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Correction.

We strongly encourage the committee to support these resolutions. Incarcerated people in Connecticut are in the state's sole care and custody. In this vulnerable position, incarcerated people are dependent on the state for provision of basic necessities like food, water, and medical care. Yet the Department of Correction (DOC) refused to screen incarcerated people for Hepatitis C or to offer treatment for this life-threatening but curable disease until they were forced to through litigation. When litigation forced the DOC to provide medical care for the people it imprisons, that treatment managed to cure 475 people of Hepatitis C.¹ This Committee now has the opportunity to approve this settlement agreement so that the state fulfills its moral and legal obligation to provide critical health care to people entering DOC custody through March 2022. The Committee must do so.

People who are incarcerated are people, with lives and health that matter. In Connecticut, incarcerated people are also disproportionately likely to be Black or Latinx, because of systemic racism in the criminal legal system – meaning that whether Connecticut values the lives of incarcerated people is a racial justice question. The Committee's vote to approve these resolutions is a chance to show that it values the lives of incarcerated people, Black people, Latinx people, and marginalized people.

¹ Lisa Backus, "Settlement in Hep C Suit Reached as 500 Inmates Cured." CT News Junkie, Jan. 14, 2021, *available at* https://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/archives/entry/20210114_settlement_in_hep_c_suit_reached_as_500_inmates_cured/.

While supporting these resolutions is necessary, it is not enough. Merely adopting the settlement agreement, which is in effect until March of 2022, does not go far enough to protect incarcerated people's lives and safety. We are still in the midst of a pandemic, and every elected official must be mindful of how important health is to all people. Making permanent guarantees of treatment for Hepatitis C, providing adequate health care including timely vaccines for COVID-19, and otherwise guaranteeing incarcerated people appropriate physical and mental healthcare is what is required of the legislature in this moment. The General Assembly should use this opportunity to not only approve the settlement agreement but also to guarantee the provision of basic healthcare to people in the custody of DOC.

We thus urge this Committee to support House Resolution 7 and Senate Resolution 5 and approve the settlement agreement in *Barfield et al. v. Quiros*.