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November 29, 2012

Hon. Joseph M. Shortall, Chair
Connecticut Sentencing Commission
Legislative Office Building, Room 2C
300 Capital Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Inmate Visitation Proposal

Dear Judge Shortall and commission members:

I am a member of the board of directors for Families in Crisis (FIC). FIC is a non-profit organization founded in 1976 (then, Women in Crisis) which focuses on the dynamics of the family unit and the significant role that these relationships play in helping offenders and their families rebuild their lives. FIC provides services to offenders and their families that are important to the criminal justice system's efforts to reduce recidivism and to prepare offenders to be productive members of their families and communities. Offenders who rejoin families and reenter communities make a much better adjustment if the family has a "safety net." Family relationships play a significant role in helping offenders rebuild their lives. Experience has taught us that if an offender maintains a positive family and has the skills to be successful within that context, the chances of successful reentry into the community increase and recidivism diminishes.

FIC offers the following programs for children and families of offenders : (a) Tomorrow's Children - A child focused counseling program for children affected by the incarceration of a parent. The program includes home-based counseling for families throughout the State. (b) Nurturing Families - A program for first time parents who may be at risk for child abuse and/or neglect and who reside in the greater Hartford area. FIC workers conduct weekly home visits to promote the healthy development of babies and ensure they are school ready by the time they are five. (c) Arts Intervention - A collaboration with the Judy Dworin Performance Project that uses art interventions to assist children to express their feelings about having a parent in prison, develop positive self-esteem and form close partnerships with other children experiencing the same struggles.

FIC offers the following programs for offenders, themselves, and their families : (a) Counseling - Trained professional counselors provide individual, family, group counseling and

case management services to offenders and members of their families. Services are provided at correctional facilities, community programs, FIC offices and within client homes. Counseling services are provided across the continuum, from pre-trial to post-release. (b) Domestic Violence Batterer Intervention - A curriculum-based domestic violence offender group that is designed to enhance victim and community safety, promote offender accountability, and provide opportunities for offenders to eliminate violent and abusive behavior in all forms. Groups are held throughout the state. (c) Parenting programs for mothers in prison - A program for incarcerated women with children to learn new ways to be better mothers. Counseling and case management are provided inside the prison as well as in the community to prepare mothers to successfully participate in the lives of their children and families. (d) Parenting programs for fathers in prison - Incarcerated fathers learn to be better fathers. Counseling and case management are provided inside the prison as well as in the community to prepare fathers to successfully participate in the lives of their children and families.

FIC offers the following re-entry programs for offenders: (a) Mentoring for Returning Offenders - Trained and supervised community mentors are matched with soon to be released offenders to provide links to services. (b) Family Support Sessions - A reentry program held in prisons and the community designed to prepare offenders and their families to successfully re-connect following separation from imprisonment.

FIC also provides transportation for offenders and their families, recognizing that when contact is maintained families remain involved in one another's lives. Visitation fosters reunification and contributes toward a prisoner's success upon release. Connecticut's prisons are located throughout the state and most are not accessible by public transportation. FIC's transportation services are offered free of charge.

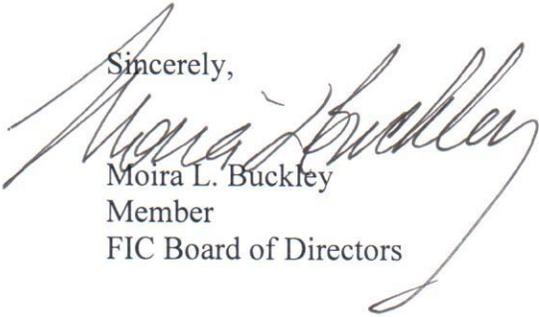
As you can see, FIC, through its services, strives to foster maintenance of family relationships, and therefore supports the enhancement of visitation opportunities and the quality of visitation for offenders and their families while incarcerated. FIC's acting Executive Director, Joyce Betts, suggested five recommendations to the Commission that will improve the quality of visitation:

- 1) Development of family friendly policies and practices that are standardized and implemented on a consistent basis.
- 2) Allow inmates to develop a list that is inclusive of all their positive social connections.
- 3) Expansion of free transportation service.
- 4) Maximize technological opportunities to connect inmates to their loved ones.
- 5) Expand the halfway house model to incorporate family friendly visiting.

Implementation of these suggestions will only serve to improve the likelihood that offenders will re-enter society as productive, law-abiding citizens. Moreover, enhancement of visitation policies will incentivize inmates to abide by DOC's rules and regulations because

inmates who have something to look forward to will be less likely to jeopardize their visitation opportunities. Please contact me at the above telephone number if you have any questions.
Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Moira L. Buckley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right.

Moira L. Buckley
Member
FIC Board of Directors