



**Connecticut State Prison Employees
AFSCME Local 391**

109 Elm Street
Enfield, CT 06082

**Testimony Regarding H.B. No. 7213
Use of Dogs in Cell Extractions**

By

**Jon T. Pepe, President
Connecticut Prison Employees Union
AFSCME Local 391**

Good Afternoon Committee Chairs Senator McDonald and Representative Lawlor and the entire Judiciary Committee. My name is Jon Pepe and I am a Correction Officer and President of the Correction Employees Union which represents 1800 members working at the 8 prisons in the Somers, Enfield and Suffield area including the North District Canine Team. **I am here today to speak against H. B. No. 7213**

The issue before this committee is the use of canines in cell extractions in the Connecticut Prison system. Since the introduction of canines into Connecticut's prison system they have and continue to be a valuable life saving tool for both the Staff and Inmate population.

I have worked as a Correction Officer for 16 years at the Hartford Jail, MacDougall Correctional Institution and currently at the Northern Correctional Institution. I have personally been involved in cell extractions and have also witnessed the use of a canine in cell extractions. It has been my personal experience that when inmates, after continual refusal to comply with orders, see the canine approach their cells they begin to comply with staff direction and though the canine was "utilized" as noted in reports, it was never actually deployed. Most of the time a canine is utilized in a cell extraction; the usage is the presence of the canine on the tier outside the inmate's cell, not actually entering the cell. When utilized, the dogs instantly subdue the inmate(s) with minimal injuries, if any.

It is important to note that the use of canines in cell extractions is extremely small when compared to the actual number of cell extractions performed each year by Correctional Staff. The use of canines in a cell extraction is dictated by the inmate(s) behavior and/or weapons involved. As in any use of force in the Prison System, once the inmate becomes compliant the use of force ceases but control is maintained. Therefore it is the inmate(s) that determine if a dog is to be used.

The injuries avoided by staff and inmates through the utilization of the Dogs in cell extractions have and continues to benefit the taxpayers of Connecticut, Staff and Inmates. Cell Extractions in themselves are chaotic struggles inside small concrete enclosures with welded metal bunks, desks and lockers where injuries are sure to occur. Combine these factors with multiple or single inmates brandishing weapons and common sense dictates a Dog enter the cell first.

Connecticut State Prison Employees walk the toughest beat in Connecticut; please allow them to utilize the tools that ensure they return home safe each day.