

A blurred, perspective view of a grocery store aisle, showing shelves stocked with various products. The motion blur gives a sense of depth and movement, leading the eye towards the end of the aisle.

Commissary Needs Report and Recommendations

**Report prepared for the Juvenile Justice Policy and
Oversight Committee**

February 14, 2022

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I. Executive Summary

Public Act 21-174 established a committee to study commissary needs and telephone services of incarcerated individuals aged 18-21. PA 21-54 granted access to free phone calls, therefore, this committee has focused its efforts on studying and making recommendations on the commissary needs of incarcerated individuals aged 18-21; however, all recommendations offered hence shall benefit all incarcerated individuals in state facilities. This group met twice monthly from September through December 2021 and there were presentations given by several state agencies concerning topics such as current DOC commissary offerings and procedures, commissary practices regarding dual status youth, and commissary services offered at juvenile facilities. Data from surveys distributed at Manson Youth Institution and other DOC facilities was then analyzed by the University of New Haven's Center for Analytics, with the full results located in Addendum A of the full report. Furthermore, commissary models from other states were studied in comparison to CT's policies and procedures.

Understanding the Issues

A properly managed commissary operation has the ability to promote individual dignity, which can in turn support an incarcerated individual's rehabilitation. Providing items that address the hygienic, dietary, cultural, racial/ethnic, religious, gender, and overall lifestyle needs of these individuals.

The state does not currently provide funding for commissary services as it is currently a self-funding venture. Mark-ups on the prices for goods (30% above initial sale value) pay for 56 state employees, capital equipment, depreciation, and more. Commissary services in the state are provided by Correctional Enterprises of Connecticut (CEC), who offer a wide array of goods for incarcerated individuals to purchase, including food, attire, non-prescription medications, entertainment options, hygienic products, and education supplies. A majority of sales are managed by the state-contracted Keefe Supply Group that collaborates with commissary workers on a biannual analysis of what products are currently being offered, what should be removed, and what could potentially be added. Further input is provided by DOC and the inmate population.

Learning from other States

In the latter half of the 2000s, the Utah DOC began implementing new policies concerning incarcerated females that provided them with new uniforms and allowed them to purchase various cosmetic products. This resulted in an immediate positive impact on the populous, as morale improved and the number of negative behaviors and disciplinary actions decreased.

The state of California has recently passed legislation limiting the potential mark-up prices on commissary goods to be no greater than 10% higher than their initial vendor sale value. Furthermore, all profits made from these sales are transferred to the Incarcerated People's Fund, which helps pay for inmate benefits, education, and welfare. As many incarcerated individuals often deal with fiscal struggles or come from an economically disadvantaged background, these mark-ups on commissary goods can be seen as a regressive tax. A reduced mark-up rate helps promote economic stability and benefits the family/other outside connections who help support the incarcerated individual, meaning it is easier to maintain such relationships.

Recommendations

The committee agreed on the following recommendations:

- 1) Expanded commissary options
 - Ensure weekly opportunities for commissary
 - Increase healthy food options, this will promote positive purchasing behaviors and healthy living habits
 - Important to remember lifestyle, health, and cultural needs; such as sugar free, gluten free, and Halal options.
 - Other commonly asked for goods include products for acne, hair, dental health, and feminine hygiene.
- 2) Decrease in mark-up on prices on commissary goods
 - Federal law allows for a maximum of a 35% mark-up on commissary goods
 - Current CT mark-up rate is 30%
 - Any significant change to mark-up will impact CEC revolving fund and its support of the Inmate General Welfare Fun.
 - DOC should review budget to develop strategies to lower the mark-up on products related to health and hygiene.
 - DOC should work with JJPOC to explore options of a non-self-supporting commissary structure
- 3) Improve options for feminine products
 - Tampons and sanitary napkins are currently provided to women on a weekly basis, with the option to request more for free.
 - DOC should expand options for feminine hygiene products, such as more brands and offering organic options.
- 4) Enhanced quality control for commissary
 - Special attention should be paid to the quality of hygienic products provided for free to individuals with limited finances
 - DOC should continue to explore expanding the number of products offered for free to these individuals.
 - Conduct annual surveys of inmates to ensure quality control.
- 5) Increased opportunities and incentives for education, employment, and programming
 - DCF currently supports youth in their charge with a monthly \$50 bank deposit. It is recommended that the CT legislature formalize these payments in policy.
 - DOC should consider making similar payments to youth with a disability, those without family supports, or any other vulnerable group.
 - Pursuing an education yields less compensation than taking part in prison labor. DOC should continue to examine increased incentives for those wishing to expand their education.
 - It is recommended to modify pay rates due to impact of inflation.

As societal views continue to trend to a mindset that supports restorative justice, an affordable commissary that addresses the various needs of the population helps recognize the individual human dignity of all those incarcerated.

II. Purpose

JJPOC Recommendation: PA 21-174 Sec. 10. (Effective from passage) There shall be a committee with members appointed by the chairpersons of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, established pursuant to section 46b-121n of the general statutes. Such committee shall study telephone call rates and commissary needs for all persons eighteen to twenty-one years of age who are incarcerated in Department of Correction facilities. The committee may make recommendations for legislation based on such study and shall report any such recommendations to the Department of Administrative Services and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to corrections in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes not later than January 1, 2022.

III. Background

A justice system focused on implementing punitive measures and designed to dehumanize and isolate incarcerated individuals does not benefit society. Under the U.S. Constitution, incarcerated individuals are guaranteed to receive services that meet their fundamental needs as humans. These services include access to food, clothing, hygienic supplies, and medical care. However, it is not uncommon for these services to be delivered in a substandard manner that further degrades individuals who are incarcerated. For young people in particular, it perpetuates the revolving door cycle of exiting a corrections facility only to wind up locked up again due to a lack of rehabilitation and improper reentry services. In order to reduce recidivism, incarcerated individuals must be treated with a level of dignity that recognizes their value as human beings. They should also be allowed to sustain existing relationships outside the corrections facility and be given access to resources that allow for rehabilitation and prepare them for a productive, post-release life.

In the era of Covid-19, personal and facility sanitation are more important than ever. Even before the outbreak of the pandemic, the Federal Bureau of Prisons recognized the importance of promoting personal hygiene practices. In 2018, the department released a series of guidelines designed to mitigate the spread of the flu that stated, “educate staff and inmates that the following measures help protect against the spread of influenza: regular hand washing-especially after sneezing, coughing, or touching the face.” Unfortunately, even with this mindset in place, numerous corrections facilities fall short of providing a sufficient amount of hygienic supplies. An adequate provision of soap varies greatly amongst facilities on the local, state, and federal levels. Many incarcerated individuals lack access to an appropriate supply of soap unless they buy it themselves from the commissary. When there is a lack of soap and other hygiene products, it can consequently lead to a heightened risk of spreading infectious diseases throughout the incarcerated population. An unsafe living environment such as this negatively impacts an individual’s rehabilitation and costs taxpayers as they must, in turn, pay for the necessary medical response. Therefore, it is imperative that facilities provide at the bare minimum cleaning supplies so that their residents can regularly wash and cleanse themselves and their environment. During the pandemic, the Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC) has not experienced such shortages and has distributed personal hygiene products to the population, with additional products available on request

Aside from the obvious physical health benefits, living in a clean environment promotes positive mental health, which is crucial in a successful rehabilitation. When the inherent worth of incarcerated individuals is elevated, there is often a reduction of negative behaviors and an increase in the motivation to change. A commissary that has a variety of other hygienic products that takes into consideration cultural/ethnic/gender needs and preferences promotes the intrinsic value of each individual. This is particularly true of hair products as the needs for proper hair health can vary widely amongst individuals. If permitted, offering cosmetics or other products that allow incarcerated persons to express their individuality further promotes human dignity. Lastly, it is imperative that all these products are available at a reasonable cost so that they are attainable by any incarcerated person who demonstrates positive change and dedicates their time to either their education or by working at the corrections facility.

IV. The Group's Work

Public Act 21-174 established a committee to study commissary needs and telephone services of incarcerated individuals aged 18-21. Due to the passing of PA 21-54, all incarcerated individuals were granted access to free phone calls. Therefore, this committee focused its efforts on studying and making recommendations on the commissary needs of this population. However, the group is in agreement that the following recommendations can and should be applied to all incarcerated individuals, in order to ensure equitable and fair treatment.

The team met two times per month from September 2021 to December 2021. There were presentations by the Department of Corrections regarding their current commissary offerings, services, and costs. The Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division presented their point and level store at the juvenile detention centers (all youth are provided with hygiene items upon admission and replaced as necessary) and the Department of Children and Families presented on their commissary support of dual status youth, as well as their previous commissary services at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School.

Surveys for incarcerated individuals were created by the committee and distributed throughout Manson Youth Institution and other DOC facilities. The survey results were analyzed by the University of New Haven's Center for Analytics and presented in this report. Research was conducted on other facilities in states such as California to get a better understanding of best practices and areas for improvement. The full membership of the group is below.

V. Membership

- Department of Corrections– Warden Derrick Molden, Rafal Matuszczak, Mark Bonaventura
- Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division – Patricia Nunez
- Department of Children and Families – Bill Rosenbeck
- Office of the Child Advocate – Heather Panciera
- Center for Children's Advocacy – Adam Yagaloff, Staff Attorney
- JJPOC Community Expertise Workgroup – Jordyn Wilson
- University of New Haven Center for Analytics – Project Manager Victoria Nielsen

VI. Overview of Current DOC Commissary

Correctional Enterprises of Connecticut (CEC) Commissary provides a means for incarcerated individuals to purchase a variety of items with their own funds. Items offered include clothing, footwear, food and snacks, vitamins and non-prescription medications, school supplies, games, hygiene items, feminine products, religious items, electronics, music CDs, art supplies, and more. A majority of items offered for sale to the inmate population are provided through a state contract with Keefe Supply Group. Orders are purchased in bulk and then sent to one of three district warehouses, where they are processed, pick-and-packed, shipped, and delivered to the incarcerated individuals weekly. The normal spending limit for non-restricted inmates is \$75 per week not including shoes, clothing, or electronics. For a 5 -week period during November and December the spending limit is raised to \$150 per week.

Facilities statewide provide inmates with a wide variety of free items. Individuals are provided with free feminine products, while additional feminine products can then be purchased at the commissary. Youth who lack fiscal capabilities are given resources once a week and as needed. The Current Indigent / Admission Kit includes a toothbrush, deodorant, shampoo, soap, washcloth, and 1.5 oz. toothpaste, priced at \$1.75 each. During COVID, this same classification of youth received specialty care packages four times in 2020 and once in 2021. DOC provides youth and staff with masks and other supplies that were put into place during COVID as masks are currently mandated at the facilities. If anyone has a medical need associated with a product, it would be addressed on an individual basis with a doctor's note, provided the product is consistent with the facility's safety specifications.

Product offerings are analyzed at least twice throughout the year by Commissary staff and Keefe. This process determines what potential items might be added or removed from the offering. Commissary Managers are in charge of finalizing these selections in conjunction with Keefe Supply Group and in consultation with the Lead Commissary Operators. In order for a new item to be added, samples must be provided and inmate workers in each of the district warehouses give input. It is additionally not uncommon for other units within DOC and/or inmates to request specific items be added to the Commissary offering as well. Items are not added to the commissary in specific cases where there are safety and security concerns or the price to the inmates would be prohibitive. It has been a long-standing practice by DOC management to review product selection periodically with the vendor and make changes as new products become available or are sought by the population. Additionally, input is collected from the population, and pilot tests of products are conducted, to capture better the demand for what appears on commissary shelves. For example, Manson Youth Institution staff will continue seeking input from the population, such as through its city hall and men's group processes, about preferences for commissary products.

Commissary is not supported by the state's general fund as it is currently a financially self-sufficient operation. These funds are sourced from markups on commissary goods. According to Administrative Directive 3.8, it is possible for goods to be marked up 35% over cost. Connecticut DOC currently marks up commissary goods by 30% following a financial analysis. Funds collected through commissary pay for the salaries of 56 state employees working within the operation and in the DOC Inmate Accounts unit. Other operational costs paid for include capital equipment, depreciation, and more. Last fiscal year, salaries were

\$3.1 million, depreciation was \$250k, capital equipment was over \$250k, other capitalized expenses were \$150k, and \$300k was transferred to the inmate welfare fund. In the past 5 years, there have been “budget sweeps,” resulting in \$3.375 million being transferred from the Commissary revolving fund to the state General Fund.

According to a recent job posting from the CT DOC, each individual Corrections Commissary Operator is responsible for managing the commissaries at several facilities. For instance, an operator assigned to District 2 would have their primary location be the Cheshire CI, but would additionally report to the Bridgeport CI, New Haven CI, Garner CI in Newtown, and Manson YI. These individuals must also complete a 12-week hazardous duty training course and pass background, drug, and physical screenings.

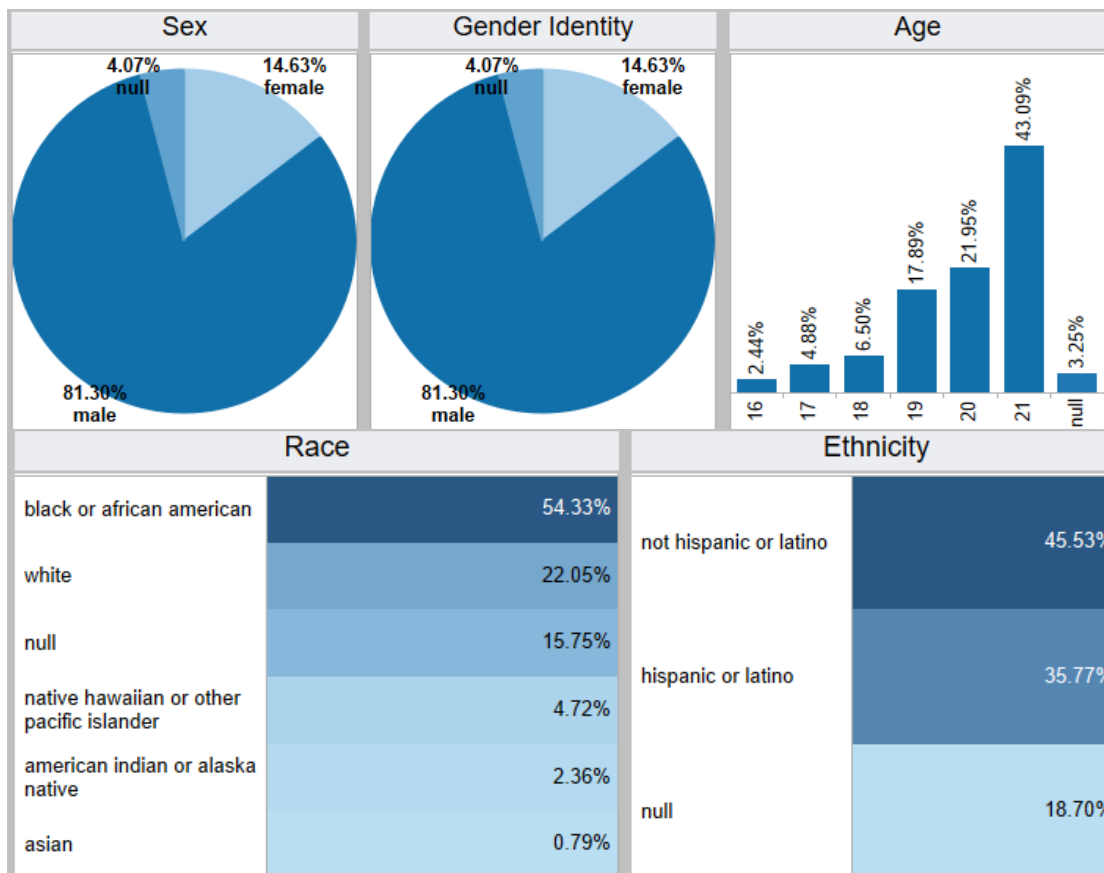
The duties assigned to a Commissary Operator fall under four main categories: inventory management, scanning/sales, security, and supervision, with the first two of these being the most relevant to the contents of this report. In terms of inventory management, the operator must regularly keep track of what commissary items are available, purchase new items, determine which items are unpopular, find new items to add to the stock, and coordinate stock deliveries. As for scanning and sales, the input of individual orders into the commissary system monitors the balance of an incarcerated individual’s account, and guarantees/verifies orders are properly delivered.

Youth who are employed in facilities earn \$0.75 per hour for 7-day jobs and \$1.75 per hour for being a barber, which is currently a 5-day job. As a result of this financial compensation, all institutional jobs are highly sought after. Any person who wishes to work is placed on a waitlist and is hired once an opening becomes available. It is possible for a youth to receive financial compensation for continuing to pursue their education; however, the pay rate is lower than any of the facility jobs.

VII. Overview of findings from surveys and focus groups

Surveys (Addendum A) were given to young individuals at DOC facilities, including the Manson Youth Institute and the York Correctional Institute. Of the 123 completed surveys returned, the demographic breakdowns were as follows:

- Gender: 81% male, 15% female, and 4% unreported
- Age: 2% 16 y/o, 5% 17 y/o, 7% 18 y/o, 18% 19 y/o, 22% 20 y/o, 43% 21 y/o, and 3% unreported.
- Race: 54% Black, 22% White, 5% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1% Asian, and 16% unreported.
- Ethnicity: 46% not Hispanic or Latin and 36% Hispanic or Latin

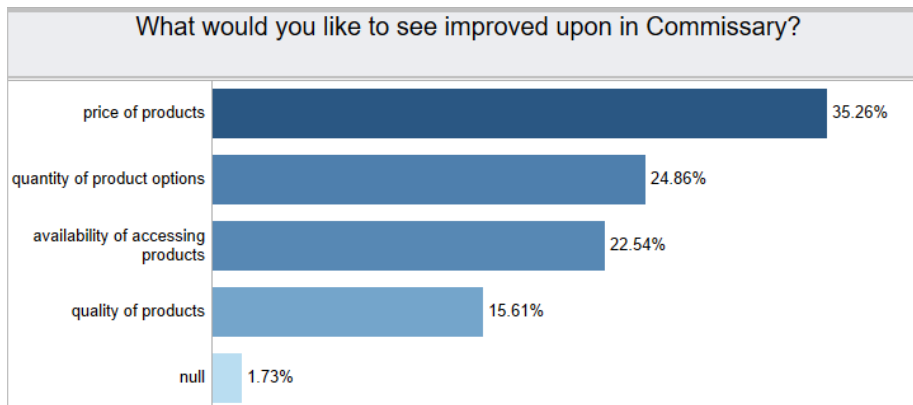


Participants were asked a variety of questions concerning their attitudes towards and how they interact with the commissary system. Topics included how they receive their funds, what they primarily spend their earnings on, and what they would like to see added to the commissary stock, along with other similar questions. They were additionally given a series of statements and asked to provide their reaction to them on a Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and 3 was neutral. Below are results from this portion of the survey; overall responses are provided along with some specific demographic categories to see if there were any differences amongst different groups.

	1	2	3	4	5
General					
Adequate funds	13%	30%	3%	46%	8%
Your basic needs are met by free items provided to you	24%	27%	5%	36%	8%
You can reliably purchase and receive commissary goods	19%	38%	2%	39%	2%
There is enough commissary stock available	23%	46%	2%	28%	2%
Commissary products are of a high quality and effective	6%	22%	4%	59%	3%
Commissary products have a reasonable cost	20%	51%	1%	28%	1%
There are a variety of items	7%	34%	5%	50%	3%
Female	1	2	3	4	5
You have adequate funds to purchase commissary goods	18%	47%	0%	24%	12%
Your basic needs are met by free items provided to you	35%	35%	12%	12%	6%

You can reliably purchase and receive commissary goods	18%	35%	0%	47%	0%
There is enough commissary stock available	24%	35%	0%	41%	0%
Commissary products are of high quality and effective	6%	41%	0%	41%	6%
Commissary products have a reasonable cost	6%	59%	0%	35%	0%
There are a variety of items	12%	47%	12%	29%	0%
Non-White Minority	1	2	3	4	5
You have adequate funds to purchase commissary goods	18%	32%	4%	41%	5%
Your basic needs are met by free items provided to you	27%	27%	5%	31%	10%
You can reliably purchase and receive commissary goods	17%	46%	3%	35%	0%
There is enough commissary stock available	26%	41%	1%	30%	3%
Commissary products are of high quality and effective	5%	24%	4%	63%	4%
Commissary products have a reasonable cost	21%	53%	0%	27%	0%
There are a variety of items	6%	37%	4%	49%	4%
Under 18	1	2	3	4	5
You have adequate funds to purchase commissary goods	11%	56%	0%	33%	0%
Your basic needs are met by free items provided to you	44%	22%	11%	22%	0%
You can reliably purchase and receive commissary goods	33%	33%	0%	33%	0%
There is enough commissary stock available	56%	33%	0%	0%	11%
Commissary products are of high quality and effective	0%	22%	0%	78%	0%
Commissary products have a reasonable cost	11%	67%	0%	22%	0%
There are a variety of items	0%	44%	0%	33%	22%

Although the general populous is relatively evenly divided on whether or not they have sufficient funds for commissary goods, responses become much more unbalanced (leaning towards not having enough funds) when responses from females and those under 18 are isolated. Most (76%) of the respondents receive their commissary money from family. A majority of participants amongst all demographic categories do not believe their basic needs are being met through the items offered to them for free. Responses from all demographic categories indicate that a majority believe there is not enough commissary stock, but the items that are there are of good quality. These results are further backed up when going through the myriad of responses in the open-ended portion of the survey. For instance, one respondent stated, “they have been out of sports bras for six months.” However, there was some dissent on the quality of the items, with one participant claiming that the current hair gel would turn hair green. Based on those same open-ended answers, there is a high demand for a healthier food selection, including fruits and vegetables. The same can also be said for hygienic and cosmetic supplies. One individual stated that “Healthier food and better quality products will provide the ability to start a newer, more productive lifestyle.” Lastly, a strong majority of participants believe that the prices for commissary goods are too high.



For those respondents of color, 51% have been restricted from commissary options at some point during their sentence and more than half of those restricted individuals were restricted for 1-3 months. Similarly, of the female respondents, 65% have been restricted from commissary at some point during their sentence and one-third of those restricted individuals were restricted for 7-9 months. Of the female respondents, 24% also reported health concerns that affect their commissary options, mostly related to sensitive/dry skin.

VIII. Overview of other models

CSSD Upon entering any juvenile facility, each individual is provided with necessary hygiene items. These items deemed necessary are a comb or brush, deodorant, shampoo and conditioner, sanitary napkins and tampons, soap, a toothbrush and case, toothpaste or powder, and toilet paper. Individuals can receive other hygiene items upon request; such as hair care products, and shaving equipment. Each individual is also provided with bedding, fitted clothing, footwear, and towels. These items are then cleaned and replaced as necessary.

DCF There are 20 young individuals who are under the custody of the Department of Children and Families. DCF provides \$50.00 a month and an additional \$25 for the holiday. This money can be spent on additional food and hygiene items in the commissary. When DCF operated the Connecticut Juvenile Training School, they managed a point store that used a positive reinforcement reward system where youth could purchase supplementary food and hygiene items. Additional items such as clothing, games and puzzles, and greeting cards could also be purchased.

National policies crafted around the idea that incarcerated people are their own individual help facilitate personal growth and often result in a decline in disciplinary problems. For example, there is a re-emerging trend of forcing inmates to wear uncomfortable, striped uniforms. The theory of “enclothed cognition” asserts that the clothing a person wears impacts their mental and emotional functionality. In 2006, the Utah Department of Corrections adjusted their policies concerning female inmates by providing them with brand new, plumb wine colored uniforms and allowed them to select their own lipstick, eye-liner, and blush. This had an immediate, positive effect upon the women and their behaviors. They felt more like individuals and were more optimistic about their futures and capacity to improve their circumstances.

The significance of enclothed cognition has been further demonstrated by a study conducted by cognitive psychologist, Abraham Rutchick. In this experiment, participants were provided with either normal or high-end, fashionable clothing. Those who wore the more expensive clothing were more likely to decline receiving an instant \$12 reward for a \$20 reward the next day. This showcases enhanced abstract processing through understanding delayed gratification. Promoting individuality in this sense can result in an incarcerated person gaining a greater sense of self and motivate them to make more positive life choices.

IX. Recommendations

1. Expanded Commissary Options

<p>INCARCERATION WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATION COMMISSARY 1</p>	<p>1) Expanded commissary options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure weekly opportunities for commissary ○ Increase healthy food options, this will promote positive purchasing behaviors and healthy living habits ○ Important to remember lifestyle, health, and cultural needs; such as sugar free, gluten free, and Halal options. ○ Other commonly asked for goods include products for acne, hair, dental health, and feminine hygiene. 	<p>Legislation</p>
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Based on feedback collected by survey participants, there is a desire to return back to being able to place commissary items every week, which is how the system previously operated. This allows individuals more opportunities to purchase and receive goods as many stated that they might not have been able to fill out the order form as a result of work, education, or not being aware that it was available. This also helps those who purchase hygienic products through commissary by allowing them to more easily maintain their health and cleanliness. Although DOC currently states that commissary is offered weekly, there were numerous responses from the survey that claimed otherwise. Some example quotes include:

- “It needs to be on a week to week basis instead of bi-weekly”
- “I wish it would be back to every week like it used to be instead of two weeks
- “I wish it wasn’t taken from me for seven days when I didn’t know about the day of sheets and I was at school and was ordered right after by a co-worker who also never told me about my sheets, when new to the unit.”

Current DOC policy provides for weekly orders. Individual circumstances—such as a person’s transfer within the same facility or to a different facility served by another commissary district, or a disciplinary matter—could explain why survey responses were received referring to a biweekly commissary order schedule.

Another common trend observed from survey data was the desire for an increase in the amount of healthy foods offered, including fruits and vegetables. By taking in a holistic, restorative justice mindset into consideration, by offering an expanded amount of healthy options promotes healthy living and positive decision making when it comes to purchasing. Putting this foundation in order will help serve the individual in their post-release life. DOC should expand the number of products available with a specific emphasis on products that are important to good health and also are products that are important to specific ethnic groups, including, but not limited to gluten-free, sugar-free, and halal options. DOC has stated that they are limited to the types of foods that one would find at a convenience store based on their storage and delivery capabilities. Based on this, some potential healthy offerings (if not already available) include plain popcorn, turkey jerky, protein bars, fruit/veggie chips, oatmeal, roasted chickpeas, pork rinds (high in protein and low in carbs), individual fruit/veggie cups, apples/pears, plums/peaches and other stone fruit, oranges and other citrus, peppers, and garlic (could be added to soups and rice that are offered). All of these options could reasonably be found at a corner store and do not require refrigeration. Expanding these options would involve discussion between DOC staff and the vendor. It has been a long-standing practice by DOC management to review product selection periodically with the vendor and make changes as new products become available or are sought by the population. Additionally, input is collected from the population, and pilot tests of products are conducted, to capture better the demand for what appears on commissary shelves. For example, Manson Youth Institution staff will continue seeking input from the population, such as through its city hall and men’s group processes, about preferences for commissary products. Other commonly asked for options included acne products, hair products (such as conditioner and product for dreads), more dental care options including different toothbrushes and teeth whitening, better soap, feminine wash, water, board games, books, and newspaper/magazine subscriptions. Additionally, some examples of brands requested were Dove, Irish Spring, Gatorade, Jergens, Gold Bond, and Axe. If anyone has a medical need associated with a product, it would be addressed on an individual basis with a doctor’s note, provided the product is consistent with the facility’s safety specifications.

2. Decrease in mark-up on prices for commissary goods

<p>INCARCERATION WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATION COMMISSARY 2</p>	<p>2) Decrease in mark-up on prices on commissary goods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Federal law allows for a maximum of a 35% mark-up on commissary goods ○ Current CT mark-up rate is 30% ○ Any significant change to mark-up will impact CEC revolving fund and its support of the Inmate General Welfare Fun. ○ DOC should review budget to develop strategies to lower the mark-up on products related to health and hygiene. ○ DOC should work with JJPOC to explore options of a non-self-supporting commissary structure 	<p>Legislation</p>
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The prison commissary market is an extremely profitable entity. According to a 2017 report from the Prison Policy Initiative, vendors who provide commissary goods to prisons made over \$1.6 billion in a single year. Federal law currently allows prison commissaries to offer products at prices up to 35% greater than the

purchased value from the initial vendor. Thusly, incarcerated individuals must rely upon the generosity of outside connections or work for abysmally low wages to afford these goods. In many cases, incarcerated individuals must rely upon purchasing hygienic products from the commissary to supplement an inadequate amount offered by the corrections facility.

California has recently reformed its commissary laws to allow for more equitable pricing of purchasable goods. Enacted in September 2020, SB 555 prohibits jails and juvenile facilities within the state from selling these goods at no more than an additional 10% their initial value. Additionally, all profits from these sales must be deposited into the Incarcerated People’s Fund where it will help pay for the benefits, education, and welfare of incarcerated individuals. Maintaining family/outside connections and economic stability are widely viewed as an essential component of achieving a successful reentry and this bill was designed to facilitate this process.

Any significant change to the Commissary markup will adversely impact the CEC Revolving Fund and its support of the Inmate General Welfare Fund. It would ultimately transfer Commissary annual operational expense to the General Fund at a cost between \$1.07M to \$2.66M, and \$300K or more for the Inmate General Welfare Fund. The CEC Revolving Fund generates funding for 56 current commissary employees as well as capital equipment and depreciation.

DOC should review their commissary budget in order to find strategies to decrease the mark-up of commissary items related to hygiene and health. DOC should also work with the JJPOC to explore options for a non-self-supporting commissary structure. As many incarcerated individuals come from struggling economic circumstances, these mark ups effectively serve as a prohibitive, regressive tax upon them.

3. Improve feminine products options

<p>INCARCERATION WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATION COMMISSARY 3</p>	<p>3) Improve options for feminine products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tampons and sanitary napkins are currently provided to women on a weekly basis, with the option to request more for free. ○ DOC should expand options for feminine hygiene products, such as more brands and offering organic options. 	<p>Legislation</p>
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Passed unanimously in both of CT’s legislative chambers in 2018, PA 18-4 guaranteed that all incarcerated females are entitled to receive tampons or sanitary napkins free of charge and upon request. The DOC distributes pads and tampons (packaged together) to every woman in the population every week. Additional feminine hygiene products can be obtained on request. Women also have the option of purchasing other brands from the commissary if preferred. In FY21, DOC Warehouses distributed \$22K for Feminine Hygiene Products to York CI. Feminine products are also available for purchase through the Commissary; which were a total sales of \$1,845.80. The DOC distributes pads and tampons (packaged together) to every woman in the population every week. Additional feminine hygiene products can be obtained on request. Women also have the option of purchasing other brands from the commissary if preferred. The DOC seeks input from the population and discusses new product selection periodically with the vendor. To improve the quality of life for these individuals and based on the survey results, it is recommended that DOC expand options for feminine products include organic products and additional brands.

4. Enhanced quality control for commissary

<p>INCARCERATION WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATION COMMISSARY 4</p>	<p>4) Enhanced quality control for commissary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Special attention should be paid to the quality of hygienic products provided for free to individuals with limited finances ○ DOC should continue to explore expanding the number of products offered for free to these individuals. ○ Conduct annual surveys of inmates to ensure quality control. 	<p>Legislation</p>
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In order to ensure that incarcerated individuals are receiving an adequate amount of hygienic supplies and other products and that these items are of a sufficient quality, there must be measures put in place that assess and guarantee that standards are being met. This is particularly true for inmates that rely on boxes with basic hygienic items provided by DOC because they do not have money to purchase from the commissary. Currently, laws state that inmates are entitled to receive products that are necessary for their health and up to industry standards, but facilities lack the capabilities to easily evaluate the quality of products and the procedures used to deliver these items. Quality control should be used to ensure that inmates are getting what they are entitled to by law, and should be expanded to examine the availability of products offered at the commissary to ensure they reflect the wants and needs of individuals who choose to purchase from it. As part of this, DOC should continue to reduce barriers to make commissary items, and importantly feminine products and items provided to indigent inmates, as easily accessible as possible. DOC should continue to explore ways to increase the number of items available to indigent inmates and ways to increase quality control procedures to ensure all inmates are getting what they are entitled. The current Commissary Operators are already responsible for maintaining the quantity and quality of commissary stock. One way to ensure quality control is to conduct annual surveys of incarcerated individuals regarding their feedback on commissary offerings and quality control, DOC can learn from the individuals themselves.

5. Increased opportunities and incentives for education, employment, and programming

<p>INCARCERATION WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATION COMMISSARY 5</p>	<p>5) Increased opportunities and incentives for education, employment, and programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DCF currently supports youth in their charge with a monthly \$50 bank deposit. It is recommended that the CT legislature formalize these payments in policy. ○ DOC should consider making similar payments to youth with a disability, those without family supports, or any other vulnerable group. ○ Pursuing an education yields less compensation than taking part in prison labor. DOC should continue to examine increased incentives for those wishing to expand their education. 	<p>Legislation</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is recommended to modify pay rates due to impact of inflation. 	
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Corrections facilities greatly benefit from the labor of incarcerated individuals as it allows them to operate on a more cost-effective basis. Food service, laundry, maintenance, groundskeeping, and custodial jobs are often carried out by incarcerated individuals for wages that only pay pennies on the hour, and some states do not even offer that much. Wages may even be diminished further due to fees from their criminal legal proceedings. Although labor is not mandatory for incarcerated individuals, many seek it out to break up the monotony of prison life, prepare for life after release, or just as a means to get by. Currently, DCF supports their youth with a monthly bank deposit of \$50. It is recommended that the Connecticut legislature formalize these payments in policy, including formalizing a process to review annual increases to these monthly payments, especially with consideration of living costs. It is also recommended that DOC consider making payments to similarly situated youth such as those with a disability, those without family supports, or any other vulnerable group.

An incarcerated individual within the United States who elects to join the prison workforce earns an average wage of \$0.14 to \$0.63 per hour. Considering the average incarcerated individual spends \$947 on commissary goods annually; they would need to work at least anywhere from 1,503 to 6,764 hours to make that much money. Wages in Connecticut for regular prison jobs are similar to the national average, with a range of \$0.13 to \$1 per hour. Those pursuing their education receive the lowest amount of compensation. Increasing this factor helps promote participation in advancing academics, making the individual more prepared for post-release life. Proposed inmate payroll increases may be necessary to address inflationary change. A recommendation to change the amount of compensation received by people in the correctional population for education or work would need to be carefully reviewed for ongoing impact on the General Fund and correctional facility climate. Once reviewed, a Pay Rate increase would have a similar effect as Commissary markup reduction on inmate purchasing ability and the General Fund at an annual cost between \$64K to \$1.52M, without impacting the Inmate General Welfare Fund or the CEC Revolving Fund structure. Inmate pay affects DOC operations, so consideration must be given for equitable solutions.

DOC should continue to explore options for increasing incentives for attending school and other programs, as well as options for increasing employment opportunities. The group agrees it is important to ensure young people are incentivized to work, attend school, or participate in DOC programming. These types of commissary incentives are currently part of the Connecticut juvenile delinquency system, and the research findings in juvenile justice policy have shown that incentives are a necessary part of any successful rehabilitation program. Detailed discussions were had on how to best implement these recommendations. Some subgroup members recommended DOC draft a report that specifically outlines an implementation plan to increase wages and other commissary incentives in education, employment, and other programming by a specific date. Other subgroup members recognize the current efforts in place and are concerned about the challenges DOC faces in order to implement these larger changes to their infrastructure.

X. Conclusion

Society's favorability of a punitive justice system is shifting towards acceptance of a restorative model that emphasizes human dignity and an individual's capability to be successfully rehabilitated. All aspects of the incarceration process must reflect this ideal, including policies and procedures concerning a correctional facility's commissary operation and offerings. Incarcerated individuals are able to more easily develop positive attitudes and behaviors when the commissary provides a variety of options that promote healthy eating, proper hygiene, and impactful self-care. Data collected over the course of this report indicates that commissary offerings within the Connecticut corrections system are already of a high quality; however, there is still a strong desire for prices to be more reasonable and for there to be more options available. Furthermore, women should be able to more easily attain feminine hygiene products and not need to request them from someone else. Effective implementation of the recommendations detailed in this report will elevate the dignity standards for incarcerated individuals. This will hopefully in turn result in a decrease in negative behaviors and disciplinary actions while also leading to improved outcomes for individuals throughout and beyond their rehabilitation process. Lastly, although the primary concern of this work group is for youth and the age range for those surveyed was 16-21, results from this report can be utilized to support the well-being of all incarcerated individuals.

A very special thanks to all the individuals and organizations who contributed to the creation of this report and its recommendations. Key recognition goes out to the UNH Center for Analytics for data analysis, DCF and CSSD for their presentations, DOC for data and survey distribution, all the youth/young adults who participated in the survey and all additional advocates involved.

XI. Addendum A

Commissary Needs Survey

1.) What do you spend most of your money on?

- A. Hygiene products
- B. Food/beverage
- C. Entertainment
- D. Health/Medication
- E. Other _____

2.) How do you get your commissary money?

- A. Working
- B. Family
- C. Other _____

3.) What would you like to see improved upon in Commissary?

- A. Price of products
- B. Quantity of product options
- C. Quality of products
- D. Availability of accessing products

Please circle what applies

4.) I feel my basic needs are being met by the commissary products provided for free.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

5.) There is a variety of items to pick from.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

6.) I find the cost of these products to be reasonable.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

7.) I can request and access Commissary when needed and my needs are met in a reasonable time.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8.) I have the funds to purchase the products I want.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9.) I feel the quality of products that are being sold are useful and effective.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10.) There is enough available in stock when I need to buy something.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11.) What new products would you like to see featured and/or expanded upon at the Commissary?

Category	Product(s)
Hygiene Products	
Food/Beverage	
Entertainment	
Other	

12.) Do you have any health concerns that affect your commissary options, such as allergies and skin conditions? If yes, please explain.

- Yes _____
- No

13.) Have you ever been restricted from accessing commissary? If yes, for how long did this restriction last?

- Yes _____
- No

14.) What do you typically buy at the Commissary?

Category	Product(s)
Hygiene Products	
Food/Beverage	
Entertainment	
Other	

15.) Do you have any additional feedback on commissary?

Demographic Questions

Please fill in what applies

Gender

- Male
- Female

How do you Identify?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary

Race

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

Ethnicity

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

Age

- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21