ABOLISH PRISON GERRYMANDERING:
NOW IS THE TIME FOR A LEGISLATIVE SOLUTION

What is prison gerrymandering?
“Prison gerrymandering” is the practice of counting incarcerated people where they are imprisoned, rather than their home communities, for purposes of redistricting. Seven states have enacted legislation to end this practice, but not Connecticut.

Why is prison gerrymandering discriminatory?
Prison gerrymandering harms both incarcerated people and residents of the communities from which many incarcerated people come, with a disproportionate impact on people of color. By counting incarcerated people in the prison towns where they have no connections, prison gerrymandering effectively denies incarcerated people meaningful representation. At the same time, prison gerrymandering unfairly inflates the population and political power of districts in which prisons are located.

Prison gerrymandering has a pronounced racial effect. Most state prisons are in rural areas that are overwhelmingly white. Most incarcerated persons come from urban areas and are African American or Latino. Urban residents receive proportionately less representation, political power, and influence than those in prison districts.

Prison gerrymandering in Connecticut violates the U.S. Constitution’s “one person, one vote” standard. It is also inconsistent with Connecticut law, which treats incarcerated people who are eligible to vote as residents of their pre-incarceration communities for voting purposes. A legislative solution to prison gerrymandering would end these legal violations.

Won’t ending gerrymandering cripple town budgets where prisons are located?
No. The federal government uses census figures to apportion funds among states, and federal funding is not tied to any particular town. Connecticut does look to census figures for some calculations, but population is just one among many factors. The legislature can end prison gerrymandering without impacting state funding for any municipality.

Who supports ending prison gerrymandering?
Numerous Connecticut organizations have previously called for an end to prison gerrymandering, including the Connecticut State Conference of the NAACP, ACLU of Connecticut, League of Women Voters of Connecticut, Common Cause Connecticut, and the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (now part of the Commission on Equity and Opportunity). Governor Lamont and Secretary of the State Merrill also support legislative reform to end prison gerrymandering.

With strong leadership, Connecticut can end this unfair practice and be a voting rights leader.