

**Testimony of Nicole Plett**  
**Steering Committee Member, Integrated Justice Alliance**  
**Before the**  
**Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism and Historic Preservation Committee**  
**May 14, 2012**

Thank you Senator Whelan and members of the Committee for holding this hearing today. My name is Nicole Plett, I am a Lawrenceville resident and a trustee of **Building One America** (formerly known as the New Jersey Regional Coalition). We are a statewide organization that is one of 22 core groups working together as the **Integrated Justice Alliance**.

**Building One New Jersey** is grassroots, multiracial coalition of faith and civic groups devoted to the idea that everyone who lives in our state has a stake in its economic and social well-being. The persistence of distressed communities of concentrated poverty affects all our state's residents: the result is residential and educational segregation, increased taxes, and reduced economic growth for us all.

Those of us here today know that the U.S. Census Bureau has counted incarcerated prisoners as if they were residents of the prison rather than at their home addresses. This is done even though New Jersey prisoners cannot vote and are not true members of the community that hosts the prison facility. Furthermore, New Jersey prisons house a disproportionate number of persons of color, many of them incarcerated for non-violent drug offenses.

As you have already heard, researchers estimate that in 2010, the Census Bureau counted almost 2 million incarcerated individuals in the wrong place; in New Jersey, an estimated 28,000 state and federal prisoners were so counted. Sadly, when communities that are already disadvantaged by racial and economic inequalities suffer a loss in population counts due to imprisonment, they suffer the further loss of political representation, which only perpetuates the crisis of incarceration.

Furthermore, this practice places the fair and democratic representation of these former and future voters -- and the fair and democratic representation of their home communities -- in severe jeopardy. Senate Bill 1055 will restore "one person, one vote" to New Jersey.

We applaud Senator Sandra Cunningham for sponsoring Senate Bill 1055 that requires New Jersey's incarcerated individuals to be counted at their last residential address for legislative redistricting purposes. Senate Bill 1055 has the full support of the **Integrated Justice Alliance** and of the **Building One New Jersey** coalition. Thank you.