

December 17, 2019

Members of the Board of Correction
1 Centre Street
Room 2213
New York, New York 10007

Re: Testimonies of Incarcerated People on Restrictive Housing

Dear Members of the Board of Correction:

Thank you for the opportunity to bring the testimonies of currently incarcerated people to these public hearings. The effort the Board has put into providing information regarding this rule-making process for currently incarcerated people within the city facilities is very much appreciated. Increasing this, through efforts such as providing one-to-one interview spaces within the city jails or ensuring that units that are movement restricted – such as Protective Custody, medical housing, and restrictive housing – have information posted in their unique housing areas would also be helpful.

I am attaching the five testimonies that were read in to the public record on December 2 and December 16, 2019. After discussion with all five individuals, they have asked that I submit their identifying information separately and attach here only the redacted versions. As these individuals are still held by the Department of Correction, I ask that the Board pay particular attention to these five individuals for the next 90 days or more to ensure they are not disproportionately targeted as a result of exercising their rights to participate in the democratic rule-making process.

The process of collecting the testimonies was as follows: I collected testimonies over the course of two days. On each day I would announce that I would be happy to work with people on their testimonies at the end of my usual programming.

At the end of my programming, I would invite anyone interested to sit with me one-on-one in the day-room portion of the housing area. I asked the interviewee to pretend I was the Board and to speak to me as if they was publicly testifying about restrictive housing. While the interviewee spoke, I transcribed the statement. We then took a break while I re-wrote my transcription more clearly. After this, I then read the statement aloud to the interviewee. We discussed if they had said all they wished to say and if there were edits or additions.

Once the interviewee was satisfied I asked them to sign consents for me to read their testimonies at the public hearings and submit them in writing to the Board. For Testimony C, a copy of the Inmate Voluntary Statement Form is also attached.

Once again, I want to thank the Board for hearing from these five individuals and for taking steps to ensure their ongoing safety.

Sincerely,



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Testimony A

What everyone on the Board of Correction needs to know is that solitary breaks you down. No matter how big or small the cell – you can't walk out, you can't get fresh air.

They say walk away from problems, you can't walk away.

You feel like an animal, like you're losing touch with yourself. It's bad enough you are losing touch with your friends and family being in jail, but this is worse; now you're losing touch with everything.

They call them forget-me-not cells. They throw you in and forget you.

Being transgender in solitary is different. An officer put a dead rat on a food tray one time. Just because I'm trans. The officers would stand outside my door and tell me to touch myself. They wouldn't give me toilet paper.

Who do I complain to about this? They control my mail and my visits. You aren't allowed a phone call. I have been in solitary and felt like nothing, forgotten.

Testimony B

I am a transgender woman currently inside the city jails. I'm not comfortable sharing my name.

I want you to know that transgender women are treated differently, even at RMSC. Whenever there is tension we are told "you'll go to a men's jail" – you know they don't say that to the other women. Whenever they separate us they handcuff us to tables.

In solitary we are denied razors. Do you know what that feels like? To have something on your body that does not belong, that feels so *wrong*? We are already isolated and already seen as different. And forcing facial hair makes everything worse. You feel defeated. I'm not sure how to explain this to someone who has never felt it.

I would complain but no one does rounds. I don't know if everyone on the Board has seen restrictive housing, but you should. You should see all of it and feel all of it before you vote on it. I can tell you what solitary does to you because I've been there.

Testimony C

I have asked that my Inmate Voluntary Statement be submitted as part of the public record.

Transcription of Inmate Voluntary Statement Form:

On November 27th, 2019; I was housed in [redacted]. According to staff and their constituents this house is the reception unit for transgender (male to female) inmates only...upon entering this housing unit [redacted] I noticed how unkempt and nasty/filthy was kept...not only are most of the cells down (uninhabitable to live in); But the running water is (Brown) which to me is contaminated/toxic. I've complained about the infestation of Rodents running in and out of my cell at all hours of the day and night sometimes hopping in my bed! The water is extremely cold to the touch as well as having a brownish hue to it...While I was there I made several complaints, they continued to house me in the [redacted] from 11-27 to 12-01-2019. It was Officer (Lodge) Badge # _____, whom was assigned to work on the 7am to 3pm shift who took it upon herself to take me to intake because she felt the conditions in there were not livable. If it wasn't for this officer I would have had to take another shower; brush my teeth in dirty filthy water I'm so grateful for Officer Lodge whom took me out of there. I'm ever so grateful to be housed where I'm at now amongst fellow women as myself. Thank you in advance for your assistance concerning this matter.

Dated: 12/02/2019



**CORRECTION DEPARTMENT
CITY OF NEW YORK**



INMATE VOLUNTARY STATEMENT FORM

Form: IVS-1
Eff: 1/24/19

Inmate's Name: _____ Date: 12-02-19

Book and Case Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Housing Area: _____

I hereby acknowledge that the following written statement issued was made VOLUNTARILY of my own free will without promise of reward, or under any threat of physical harm or fear of such. Additionally, you will not be subject to any form of retaliation for providing information in connection with this investigation by the New York City Department of Correction.

On Nov. 27th 2019, I was housed in _____ according to staff and their constituents this house is the ~~reception~~ reception unit for the transgender (male to female) inmates only... Upon entering this housing unit (C-) I noticed how unkempt and nasty/filthy was kept... Not only are most of the cells down (inhabitable to live in); But the running water is (bleed) which to me is contaminated toxic. I've complained about the infestation of rodents running in and out of my cell at all hours of the day and night sometimes happening in my bed. The water is extremely cold to the touch as well as having a brownish hue to it... While I was there I made several complaints, they continued to house me in the - _____ from 11-27 to 12-01-2019.

I was officer (Lodge) Badge # _____, whom was assigned to work on the 7am to 3pm shift who took it upon herself to take me to intake because she felt the conditions in there were not livable. If it wasn't for this officer I would have had to take another shower, wash my feet in dirty filthy water. I'm so grateful for officer Lodge whom took me out of there. I'm ever so grateful to be

Inmate's Signature: _____ Date: 12-02-2019

Witness by (print name): _____ Witness Signature: _____ Rank: _____ Shield Number: _____

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

INMATE VOLUNTARY STATEMENT

Inmate's Name: _____ Date: _____

Book & Case #: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Housing Area: _____

I hereby acknowledge that the following written statement issued was made VOLUNTARILY of my own free will without promise of reward, or under any threat of physical harm or fear of such

cont

*housed where I'm at now amongst fellow women
As myself.
Thank you in advance for your assistance concerning
this matter.*

INMATES SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

WITNESSED BY: _____
Print Name Signature Rank Shield

Testimony D

My experience with the disciplinary process was the unfairness of even how the hearing was presented due to lies written on the reports. If you ASK for witnesses from inmates they are scared to even say something being they feel that they are going to be retaliated against by staff; so at that point, they hate to get involved.

With certain tickets of real seriousness they should have a lawyer to help represent them.

And even the holding box/SHU units should have cameras throughout the unit: due to mistreatment in the past such as turning on the cold air to make inmates quiet.

Testimony E

My last experience in the box or solitary confinement was horrible. They had one hot meal and that was lunch. Breakfast was cold and dinner was bologna and bread. Mind you, this was at OBCC.

We were locked in for 23 hours a day, one hour recreation. Phone usage was once a month and most times they ran recreation so early that you never went. They never let me out due to me being "a girl."

My experience with Protective Custody was like any other men's jail because they put us in a men's facility when we ask for protective custody. Which to me makes no sense. So if I have a issue with someone I must be subjected to being treated as a man? due to asking for help?

Protective Custody in a men's facility is just like General Population. There's always a fight in the unit and also discrimination. There's always lock downs, special searches and sexual harassment. Why don't they have protective custody for us here; and also why don't we have any cell blocks for us to live in?