

Name: Anonymous Anonymous

Title:

Organization or Agency:

Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed

NA

Testimony:

To Governor Lamont and Correctional Advisory Committee Members:

I am incarcerated at York Correctional Institution. It may sound like a place we come to correct our mistakes, to reflect on ourselves, a place for change, but this is not always true. When I hear the words Department of Correction, I see nothing but cold incongruous blocks of cement, barbed wired detention center with iron bars or metal doors with officials waiting for you on the other end to make your life a living hell. Many of them would mentally torment you, mentally making you feel more imprisoned.

We have mentally disturbed and physically disabled people that should not be classified with people who on a "regular track" population. This creates friction for both groups with damaging results. The mentally ill or special needs people are often shunned or easily taken advantage of by prison officials. We have mentally disturbed or disordered individuals housed in units where they are pretty much isolated 24/7 without breathing fresh air or unable to go to the gymnasium. They are placed in isolation from the populations programmings, stuck in hot day rooms all day.

There are some people who arrive here without indication of mental illness and who eventually display signs of chronic depression, anomie, persistent lethargy, anxiety, and social deprivation for some who are in solitary confinement. These people are prone to be vulnerable to abuse by officials, especially when you also develop PTSD due to the constant screaming and yelling by staff.

We have very small dayrooms so there's guards that at night shift while we are asleep walk by our doors jiggling their keys so loud by our doors as if they are touring a big hall. They do it to be malicious. The pervasive atmosphere of despair, negativity, and hopelessness that pervades every corner of the facility is so palpable that even the clinical staff experience constant turnover despite the fact that they can go home every night, on weekends, and holidays.

While attempts are made to mitigate the abject boredom that most of the inmates have to endure daily, there is little to look forward to outside of the routine of meals, TV, school because of the constant lockdowns here, and others are just simply waiting to die here. We cannot successfully complete vocational programming, other groups and classes with the constant lockdown here at York due to short staffing. There are days where we cannot shower after a long day at work because the facility wants to lock us up and some staff won't allow us to shower after work.

More than a few of York's population are not nearly as mprisoned by electric fences, walls and guards as they are by their own submersion in senses of futility and despair. It's never okay to subject someone to verbal, psychological, or physical abuse. We need change, structure and social order. The abuse must stop!

Guards don't know what paths we have walked in this life, and think it's okay to talk to us in ways that would hurt us mentally or emotionally. Some of us aren't aware what path the guards have walked in life themselves, and sometimes they bring their own conflicts to work and lash out on us.

I personally want to pardon other inmates who choose to not want to follow the official's orders or to verbally attack back. As I said previously, it is not okay to abuse, there is no excuse period. Whether a guard is going through personal matters, we do not deserve the maltreatment. The guards should serve as

mentors, not tor-mentors. I'm grateful for a couple of guards that speak and converse with us in ways that give us a sense of self belonging. I've seen those guards who wish our success and progression here at York.

We have a lot of healthcare issues where I feel as though the medical staff are neglecting our cares. I've had an ongoing medical problem that commenced in late 2021. To this day I have not gotten care for it. This is an ongoing problem with the rest of the population.

We have a lot of women who have had their female anatomy removed due to medical treatment delays. Women that were still able to produce life and are young in age. We have people who barely see a dentist or an eye doctor.

This is why we need a person like Barbara Fair to be elected as ombudsperson. She will fight for our rights and wellbeing by investigating our concerns and working to find solutions, just as she's been doing for years in her role as director of the nonprofit stop solitary in Connecticut. Her work with incarcerated people, the DOC, the legislature and the governor has already taught her who's who and what's what in this criminal justice system. We will feel free to share our experiences with her because she has already earned our trust. And as a CT Licensed Clinical Social Worker, she understands what to do and what NOT to do to best prepare people who are incarcerated now but will one day return to society.

Respectfully submitted,

A person incarcerated at York Correctional Institution