

**Name:** Anonymous Anonymous

**Title:**

**Organization or Agency:**

**Topic:** Meeting Date Not Listed

NA

**Testimony:**

Dear Governor Lamont and Committee Members:

I am writing from York C.I., where I have resided for the past 18-years. I entered the prison as a juvenile and have grown up in the prison system. Prison isn't a place for anyone, let alone a child who had not yet developed the skills needed to navigate the prison experience. Although prison is not intended to be pleasant, this has been a traumatic experience that has caused lasting damage to me. Prison should not be intended to be that or to do that to a person either.

Prison has crippled me in so many ways. Between the mistreatment and neglect, it amazes me that anyone leaves places like these intact, especially after serving any significant amount of time. The mental and emotional abuse is omnipresent and shows up in the most subtle but constant ways. For example, staff don't speak to us with civility. They're not required to. They bark orders. They call us derogatory names: bitches, cunts, whores, crack heads, dope fiends, skids, scum bags, losers.

And the list goes on. Some outright ignore us if we ask a question. This, over time, completely obliterates our personhood, as if we don't even exist. Simple orders are always punctuated by a threat. These threats range from revoking our out of cell time, to withholding the phone system so that we can't make calls to family, to "fucking up" our cells and our belongings, to physical harm. These threats are issued randomly, constantly and without cause. It's all meant to terrorize us. But this is treated like it's normal, just part of the job.

Imagine living in constant fear, waking up to a threat, eating under threat, traveling down the walkway under threat, going to bed under threat. Not a day of my incarceration have I ever felt safe. I live with the anxiety of knowing at any point any time of day night, some one can show up at my cell door and take me to seg "pending investigation" for no real reason. I don't have to do anything to get a ticket. All that's needed is for a staff member with a grudge or who's having a bad day to SAY I did something and to write it up. There goes my job, my seat in college and my REC credit ("good time"). There goes my chance at making parole. Staff can do and say anything to me and the second I respond in kind, I'll be hauled off to the hole.

Certain guards deliberately antagonize us. For example, some canine handlers provoke their dogs when we walk by so that the dogs, worked into a full lather, strain at their leashes and lunge at us, barking, foaming at the mouth. The staff often behave like hooligans, running to cat fights and "jumping" us in situations where much less force can be used. After all, most fights consist of two hair-pulling girls.

I remember a time when I was fighting with another girl. I was barely 18-years old and had gotten into a scrap in the yard. I'm 5'1" tall and at the time weighed about 95 lbs. A female guard came charging at me, removed her heavy, black radio from her utility belt and cracked me in the skull with it, opening my scalp. Disoriented, I began to flail my arms and fight with the unknown person who had split my head. Instead of deescalating the situation and merely restraining me, she fought me as if we were in the street. This guard was old enough to be my mother.

This event led to me receiving outside charges and more time added to the more than 3 decades I was already serving. When the state police came to charge me, I reported the incident what she had done to me, and I showed him the exposed white meat on my head. The guard was never charged. I reported her

to DOC supervisors (even though many of them had witnessed the incident). Nothing was done internally. I asked to go to an outside hospital to receive medical treatment for my split scalp. My request was denied. The guard was seen by medical staff even though she was not injured. I still wear that scar this day. Several onlookers were so upset by the incident that they had to be taken to crisis.

This altercation led me on a downward spiral. I ended up in seg and continued to get in trouble and accumulate write ups while in there because after being attacked, I no longer respected authority.

While I was classified to seg, outdoors for my hour out of cell time, a male lieutenant snatched me by my shirt and slammed me into the edge of a brick wall, busting my lip. Infuriated, I spit the blood at him. He closed-fist punched me in the face so hard, he knocked me clean off my feet. This all happened because I wasn't moving fast enough. I should mention that I was fully restrained during this entire interaction. Again, I received outside charges and the lieutenant was not disciplined. Other than two black eyes, I had no tangible proof. I was told that the surveillance camera was "out of order".

Barbara Fair will be just right for the job of ombudsperson to address abuses such as these and hopefully, to keep them from happening at all. One would think that incarcerated people pose the biggest threat to other incarcerated people because we're assumed to be violent and out of control. But that hasn't been my experience. I am, by far, much more fearful of our keepers. No one should spend years being afraid of the people hired to maintain safety and security. I'm hoping that Barbara Fair will be given the chance to do something about it.

Anonymously submitted for my safety