

Keri L Schneider, #925-218
MD Correctional Institute for Women
7943 Brockbridge Road
Jessup, MD 20794

January 2024

To the Maryland General Assembly Judicial Proceedings and Judiciary Committees

IN FAVOR- Correctional Ombudsman Bill # SB0134/HB0297

My name is Keri L. Schneider (nee Killion) and I have been a Maryland resident all of my life. I am a fifty-one year old female and mother of one child. I became incarcerated in 2008 and, at this point, I am not scheduled to be released until after 2050. I support a favorable vote in support of the Ombudsman bill.

The problems in the facility are many-fold but today I would like to concentrate on inadequate mental health care and lack of proper health care.

Regarding mental health care, there is one therapist (sometimes two) that covers the entire population here at MCI-W. Most people are unable to be seen at all and those that are have minimal time at infrequent intervals with their therapist. The list of approved medications has gotten smaller over the years and the psychologist throws the same five drugs at everyone hoping they will work for someone. I am prescribed my mental health medications to be administered at 5:00am and 5:00pm as my Lithium is best taken at an even twelve hours apart. This worked well for me. Recently, the administration determined that they would do away with 5:00pm medication call, regardless of our needs and what our doctor might say. I have talked to my doctor about this, she says it is out of her hands. I requested to be put on "Yellow Pass" which is a medication call at 5:00pm in the nurses office. I was told that wasn't for people with psych meds. I sometimes get my evening medication as late as 9:00pm and I suffer every night waiting for medication call. *My doctor recognizes that I do better with my meds at evenly spaced intervals and there is a "Yellow Pass" call at 5:00pm, but I am not allowed to go because my medication is psychiatric.*

The next mental health issue regards those who go to Treatment Services under a suicide watch. They do not receive counseling during this time. They may be seen for a brief moment in a treatment meeting but basically are left to themselves in the cold cell. If they weren't sure if they wanted to commit suicide when they went over there, they usually want to by the time they leave. There is no help available for these women. They are observed by other inmates who watch them in the cell but are not supposed to talk to them. This process is broken, provides no counseling for the inmate who leaves suicide watch no better than when they came in.

My main health care complaint is the lack of preventative care for incarcerated women. We do get annual mammograms and pap smears but prevention stops at that. I have been here for 15 years and have about 30 more years to go and I don't want to die in prison.

When I asked about colon cancer screening, I was told that they didn't do that here. The way they tell if we have colon cancer is if the levels in our blood change. Those blood levels will only change once we have the cancer, not allow preventative steps to be taken.

Another woman incarcerated here is in remission for breast cancer and was told six weeks ago that her cancer numbers had increased and they wanted to send her back to her oncologist. Six weeks later she still hasn't gone out. During this time, her cancer is likely spreading each day that she doesn't have treatment.

In May 2022, Dr. Berger, my podiatrist, said that I would be sent to Hanger to have insoles made especially for my feet. I have bunions and plantar fasciitis and my feet hurt *ALL OF THE TIME*. I have followed up with the scheduling nurse several times and still have not been sent out. I suffer every day and my insoles could alleviate at least some of this pain.

If inmates can elect to be transgender and receive hormone shots and breast reductions, why can't I get a recommended colon cancer screening?

I feel as though an Ombudsman would weigh the issues at hand and make an impartial decision. I believe that the decisions made here are to save a dime without regard to our health or wellbeing. People are dying and have died here from lack of early diagnosis.

I, Keri Schneider, am asking for a FAVORABLE VOTE in support of the Correctional Ombudsman Bill. Thank you for your time and consideration in these matters.

Keri Schneider

December 12, 2023

SB 0134/HB 0297

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to humbly petition for lower cost of Commissary and Institutional Catalog Items, for incarcerated individuals to just and reasonable pricing and selection. Statics shows that the majority of the population comes from middle to lower class citizens. At this time, it is pricey for any and all Americans to live on the outside, therefore can you imagine the struggle for a prisoner? If one does not have some relief from the outside and/or an instructional position making pennies on the dollar (literally,) they will not be able to obtain the things we need, nor less want.

As an incarcerated person, we do not have options, especially the option to shop around for deals or be privy to sales or discounts. Amazon, Giant, Safeway are neither available, nor Black Friday or Cyber Mondays available to us. More than likely, this is yet another inflated price tag passed down to our families and friends to attempt to help provide for our wellbeing.

I am asking for some "Just Mercy" in our situation. Are we all not implicated, when we allow other people to be mistreated? This is definite mistreatment when the prices are so inflated to accommodate the 30% of the net profit that comes back to the state of Maryland and from Keefe and other institutional catalogs. They are getting over and misusing the power to be fair, firm and impartial. If the roles were reverse, they would be the ones writing this petition for legislation in their favor. Somewhere along the lines greed superseded humanity and the bottom line profit is all they see.

Our families are tax-paying voters for the state of Maryland. I am not debating the fact that we are incarcerated for restorative justice and to be reformed for release back into society. There has to be a better way to provide for us and meet the bottom line in profit without exploiting the disenfranchised people of the state and our families.

Thank you for your time and attention to this very important matter. I am looking forward to a positive change for the future.

Kindest Regards,

Nicolle Jackson
2559813/920-444

Kimberly Hricko #1799437
Maryland Correctional Institution for Women
11/19/2023

To the Maryland General Assembly Judicial Proceeding and Judiciary Committees

IN FAVOR-Correctional Ombudsman Bill SB0134/HB0297

I am a Maryland resident and have been incarcerated at MCIW for nearly 26 years. In that time there have been five governors, seven wardens, and thousands of correctional officers and associated staff directly affecting living conditions within our prisons. Until the pandemic I would have said it was possible to maintain a decent quality of life here. I would not say that now. Conditions here have hit a new low and our immediate administration is unresponsive to our pleas. For this reason I support a favorable vote in support of the Correctional Ombudsman Bill.

The lack of independent oversight for essential operations coupled with the labyrinthine ARP/IGP process permits a wide spectrum of harmful situations to occur inside Maryland prisons. The ARP process, an inmate's only avenue for serious complaints, is essentially the prison system policing itself. An Institutional ARP Coordinator (usually an officer or case manager) is responsible for answering ARPs within each prison. It is normal to receive a "dismissal" at the prison level for even the most egregious violations. The warden signs these responses, without reading them I believe. This initial phase of the process may take up to 45 days and usually does. The warden's decision may be appealed to the Commissioner of Corrections. This normally leads to another dismissal and takes another 45 days or more. The third step of ARP process is an appeal to the Inmate Grievance Office for a hearing before and MD Administrative Law Judge from the office of Office of Administrative Hearings, unaffiliated with DPSCS.

Here's the rub. The gatekeepers of the IGO hearing process, are located within the ARP office at DPSCS Headquarters. DPSCS decides which issues move forward. While it is still possible to get a hearing on an issue, the chances have been reduced to a fraction of what they were before the once independent IGO office was absorbed by DPSCS.

The Office of Administrative Hearings provides MD inmates with a proper hearing of the complaint and can yield fair results but it takes over a year to get there. Many issues are more pressing than that, but ARP is our only tool. In addition to the length of the process, there are many delays, deadlines and dead ends that can prematurely end the ARP process. By design, only the most experienced inmates are able to navigate the path and obtain a solution to their issue. Most don't try, finding the ARP an empty process.

Independent oversight could address basic complaints in a timely manner before they become critical or wide-spread systemic issues.

Please give your favorable vote for the Correctional Ombudsman Bill

Robert Pittman #305353
2020 Toulson Rd, Jessup, Md
1-10-24

TO: The Maryland General Assembly Judicial
Proceedings And Judiciary Committees

RE: To Gather Support for the Correctional
Ombudsman Bill SB0134/HB0297

I am a life long Maryland resident who
has been incarcerated within DPSCS facilities
the last 23 years and I am writing
urging for your support of a favorable vote
in support of the Ombudsman Bill.

There are many challenges that are
within DPSCS for not having an independent
oversight over the correctional operations;
But I am only going to focus on one.

Once I was placed in a cell that had no
heat and had a rock placed in the window
by a Correctional Officer so it couldn't close.
It was so cold that the water in the toilet
was frozen. I repeatedly ask the officers
if they could take the rock out of the
window and was told "NO!". I was so cold

That I had to cut open the mattress, put all of my sheets and blankets inside, and climb in. I was within this element for about a week. I was there until a Captain came through and seemed a cut mattress. He said opened the cell to see "Why I destroyed State property". When he opened the door he understood instantly. I was moved at that moment. I was moved but no one was held accountable for treating a human being in such a way.

Most, if not all, of the issues within this facility are occurring because of a lack of accountability. An independent oversight will resolve these issues or bring them to light before they become wide-spread systemic issues.

Enclosing, what happens in jails and prison does not stay inside jails and prisons. It comes home with returning citizens after they are released and correctional officers at the end of each day's shift. When people live and work in facilities that are unsafe, unhealthy, unproductive, or unhumane, they carry the effects home with them. We must create safe and productive conditions

Of confinement not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it influences the safety, health, and prosperity of us all.

Due to this, I Urge you to vote in favor of this bill. It will not only make DPSAS better, it will make Society better.

Thank you
Robert Pittman

Matthew Lopez - 488404

2020 Toulson Road, Jessup, MD, 20794

12-19-2023

To the Maryland General Assembly Judicial Proceedings and Judiciary Committees.

RE: Supporting the Correctional Ombudsman Bill
SB0134/HB0297

I have been a Maryland resident for the past 24 months incarcerated within DPSCS Facilities. I'm writing pushing for your vote, in support of the bill.

There are many challenges that are within DPSCS for not having independent oversight over the Correctional operations. My main focus points will be on the following; Case management, vocational programming, and outside recreation.

All statements made are things I have personally went through and seen others go through.

Casemanagement upon arrival may take up to 30 days to be seen. Most case managers will see you either on your 30th day or even past that.

When you finally see the case managers, they will tell you they put in your paperwork, or get you assigned, but never really put it in. After weeks go by, you'll still be sitting wondering what's happening, write request but never get a response; only ~~the~~ to realise they will tell you it was never put in. When they finally put it in 2, 3 even 4 months will go by, not only costing you good days for working, but money as well. This goes for all paper work, Home detention, work release, programs, and even home plans. I myself I have been denied home detention, because I have an in interstate compact to Massachusetts. But was never shown paper work. I was told they put my work release paperwork to later find out (2 months later) it was never put in. It took for family and friends to call, email, harass to get a direct answer from someone. I was even told to have my family stop calling. Case Management is/are not properly trained, or deliberately not doing their job!

Vocational programs, well there isn't any. When I ask why I was not given an answer. To make this simple, wouldn't it make sense to ~~just~~ give us men some training that have 3 years or less. I say that to

this. If you give us training in, HVAC, Electricity, plumbing, Carpentry, right before we go home, we'd more likely find a job. Only giving programs like this to people on a compound doesn't make sense. If we leave the prison within 6 months of these programs, we'd not only have a less chance of coming back, it gives people something to look forward to. We need these programs year round!

Outside recreation, if that's what they call it. Being in a minimal/pre-release facility why is this not something we have all day? If you don't have a job you're literally stuck in a building all day! 1 hour a day is not enough for most people. Imagine having a phone call that someone passed, and you can't even get a fresh breath of air because you don't have access. That's also if you even have rec. Sometimes they cancel without reason. Some, if not all days, don't take so long that you barely have 45 minutes. Lots of times we'll have 20 minutes.

Most if not all of these issues, within DPSCS are because of lack of accountability. An independent oversight will bring light to these issues.

In closing, what happens within these walls, should not stay within these walls. These issue along with other issue takes a toll on peoples lives. It develops, anxiety, depression, anger, and hopelessness. We should create a more safe and effective system that helps all people, even the workers.

Due to this I Urge you to VOTE in favor of this bill, not only to better DPSCS, but Society as a whole.

Thank you.
