

AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR PRISON HEALTH CARE REFORM

January 21, 1998

Ana Olivares, Warden
California Medical Facility at Vacaville
P.O. Box 2000
Vacaville, CA 95696

Dear Warden Olivares:

We are writing to you as representatives of the Ad Hoc Committee for Prison Health Care Reform. This group is made up of culturally diverse organizations and individuals who are dedicated to improving the medical and mental health care conditions for people who live behind bars. We are deeply concerned about the health care needs of the transgendered prisoner population housed at your facility. It has been brought to our attention, that the medical as well as the mental health care remains poor and/or nonexistent at the California Medical Facility for the transgendered prisoner. The following is a list of quality care issues which we are concerned about:

- 1) Correctional Officers and other staff receive no training on the psychosocial-bio issues of the transgender (TG) community. Some corrections officers demean, demoralize, humiliate and discriminate against TGs.
- 2) The correctional facility does not have a mental health program which addresses the mental health needs of the TG prisoner. Correctional mental health service views TGs as deviant and pathological.
- 3) The correctional facility does not have a medical clinic addressing the unique medical needs of the TG prisoner.
- 4) The TG prisoner should be housed in a special unit within the correctional facility where they would be allowed to live their lifestyle within the limits and rules of the facility. Many are housed with other prisoners and are raped and emotionally abused.
- 5) Currently TGs at CMF are the only non-HIV+ incarcerated group housed in the HIV/AIDS program. This places them at risk for infection of HIV.
- 6) Incarcerated TGs are not even considered eligible for hormone therapy unless they received this therapy prior to incarceration. In reality, it is rare for those who received hormones prior to incarceration to be approved to receive hormones while incarcerated. And it can take months for hormones to be approved in the very rare cases when they are.

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- 7) TGs living with HIV/AIDS are denied hormones. They were also denied being able to attend a TG sensitive support group. There was no support group offered in their area addressing their unique needs.
- 8) The California Department of Corrections needs to develop an official policy in the DOM Department Operations Manual which addresses the psychosocial-bio needs of the incarcerated TG community. To date there is no such document.
- 9) TGs who are incarcerated should be provided HIV/STD peer education which is sensitive to the TG community. They receive no HIV or other health information.
- 10) The incarcerated TG should be protected from sexual assault, physical and verbal abuse and discrimination. The experience of the TG prisoner is feeling unprotected.
- 11) All transgender prisoners whether they are HIV positive or not are disciplined more harshly than the general population for the same offense.
- 12) TGs are not allowed to wear make-up or feminine clothing. Many who have developed breasts are not allowed to wear bras. They are strip-searched by male officers.

The Ad Hoc Committee for Prison Health Care Reform is requesting that the California Medical Facility investigate the health care concerns identified above. We are also requesting a formal meeting with you to discuss our concerns and develop solutions to this serious deficiency in health care delivery. Please contact either Scott Cozza at (707) [REDACTED] or Judy Greenspan at (510) [REDACTED], to set-up this meeting. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Scott Cozza, Advocate

Judy Greenspan, Director,

HIV/AIDS in Prison Project

Anne Donnelly, Policy Director, Project Inform

Eileen Hansen, Policy Director,

AIDS Legal Referral Panel (ALRP)

Irwin Keller, Executive Director, ALRP

Lisa Johnson and Rachel Bernstein, LYRIC

Rob Guzman, SF Department of Health

Barbara F. Anderson, Ph.D., Gender Identity

Services, Center for Special Problems

Willis Johnson, New Village, National Task Force
on AIDS Prevention

Nancy Nangeroni, International Foundation for
Gender Education

Lara Johnson, Organization for Sensible and
Effective Prison Policy

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Karen Shain, California Coalition for Women
Prisoners

Signers continued:

Dorsey Nunn, Legal Services for Prisoners with
Children

Cindy Chandler, Women's Positive Legal Action
Network

Paul Lefrak, Free Mumia Coalition/Anti-Racist
Action/Ann Arbor

Jennifer Wood, Department of Communications
University of Pittsburgh

Barry Norris, Advocacy Director, Project AIDS-
Louisville

Bill Healy, Vice President and Treasurer, People
AIDS Coalition - Hawaii

Cynthia Anne [REDACTED]

Riki Anne Wilchins, Executive Director,
Gender-PAC

Joshua Goldberg

Rosalyn Bloomenstein, Director, Gender Identity
Project

Leslie [REDACTED]

Betty Lou [REDACTED]

Jeremy Burke

Barbara [REDACTED] Cambridge, England

cc: State Senator John Burton
State Senator John Vasconcellos
Assemblywoman Carole Migden
Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl
Various Members of the Media