

AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR PRISON HEALTH CARE REFORM

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For Immediate Release:

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WARDEN AT VACAVILLE PRISON HOLDS HISTORIC MEETING WITH BAY AREA TRANSGENDER PRISONER ADVOCATES

San Francisco, May 1 – A meeting was held yesterday between Warden Ana Ramirez Palmer of the California Medical Facility (CMF) at Vacaville and representatives of an ad-hoc committee advocating for the rights of transgender prisoners. The meeting, held inside the prison, marks the first time that an official of the California Department of Corrections (CDC) has met to discuss the care and treatment of the transgender prison population.

“We requested this meeting after learning about the lack of services and care for transgender prisoners at CMF-Vacaville,” said Patricia Kevena Fili, a minister and transgender activist. “We presented our concerns fully yesterday to Warden Ramirez Palmer and key members of her staff, who listened carefully and promised to meet further with us to resolve these problems,” Fili added.

In a meeting that lasted two hours, the ad-hoc committee raised many concerns of the incarcerated transgender community at CMF-Vacaville. According to Scott Cozza, a social worker and former CDC employee, lack of staff sensitivity often leads to victimization and discrimination and transgender prisoners do not have access to specialized medical services including hormone therapy. While working at CMF, Cozza led a “rainbow” support group for the transgender prisoners.

According to Warden Ramirez Palmer, new CDC regulations do not allow payment for hormone treatments. Ad-hoc committee members and CMF staff discussed the possibility of bringing in an outside medical consultant to prescribe hormones for the transgender prisoners requesting them. Until the CDC regulation is changed, however, outside advocates would have to pay for the hormone medication.

“The transgender members of our delegation helped educate Warden Ramirez Palmer about the need to adopt a positive and all-encompassing definition of transgender,” said Judy Greenspan of the HIV in Prison Committee of California Prison Focus. A transgender ad-hoc committee member, who is involved with law enforcement, offered to conduct sensitivity trainings for staff at the prison.

“We are hopeful that conditions will improve at the prison for the transgender population and look forward to future meetings with CMF staff,” said ad-hoc committee member Fili.

Contact List for Transgender/Intersex/Gender-Variant Prisoners Project Meeting

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