

Submitted Testimony From Inmate

Ms. Erika Amber-Marie Desire

Inmate # 240033

Osborn Correctional Institution

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I, Ms. Erika Amber-Marie Desire, a Transgender Female who's Birth Cert. Picate and Identification identify my Legal Gender is "Female", and am housed in The Osborn Correctional Institution, Enter and submit This Testimony from my personal experience and Effects, to The Joint Committee on Judiciary.

I would first like to address The issue of Connecticut General Statute 18-81ii which was placed into Law to protect Transgender and Intersex persons incarcerated in The Connecticut Department of Corrections (CDOC).

This Law was suppose to protect individuals like myself but The Ct. D.C., has repeatedly changed and butchered The Departments Administrative Directive 817 "Gender Diverse" which is suppose to be consistent with Connecticut state Law. We can no longer even Appeal any Decision!

As stated, My Legal gender is "Female", yet My safety, well-being, and Life have been placed in imminent danger by The Department of Corrections "Diverse Review Committee" by being forced to have "Male" cell partners, and take a shower in The presence of "Male" inmates even after repeated complaints and requests not to be subjected to This.

Inmate Legal Assistance, Gay Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (G.L.A.D.), and The Ombudsman's office all had to be contacted and provided evidence just to try to intervene and help. But These issues still persist and put not only my safety, well-being, and Life in harms way but also ALL incarcerated Transgender (and) Intersex persons.

The Latest is The Administration at Osborn Correctional Institution converting a cell [5] in The units (B-unit/cell #1) into a "Communal" Bathroom with only a shower curtain as a Door, which when viewed from The top tier can see a person using The toilet. We are forced to use This "Bathroom"

or return to our cell and forfeit our "out-of-cell time". A clear P.R.E.A. violation yet it still occurs. This is a safety and security issue.

I would like to request from The Joint Committee on Judiciary a Resolution in the form of a "Complete Overhaul" of CT D.O.C. Administrative Directive 8.17 "Gender Diverse", and New Leadership to oversee All Transgender and Intersex Incarcerated persons to ensure safety, wellness, and fairness and to protect those persons' constitutional rights. I propose that in doing this, that the guidance of The Ombudsman's office be used in this process, and any oversight that might be warranted.

The second thing I would like to address is The CT D.O.C. Health/Medical Department which has recently changed policies that adversely affect Transgender (and) Intersex persons, who are incarcerated, overall mental, psychological, and physical wellbeing.

The "Medical Policy and Procedure Manual" was changed to state that "No Referral shall be submitted requesting Plastic Surgery, electrolysis, or Any other surgical procedure for Transgender (or) Intersex incarcerated persons."

The CT D.O.C. Administrative Directive 8.1 "Scope of Health Service Care" has also been changed "Excluding" "Gender Affirming Surgery" stating it has No obligation to provide or pay for this service.

I, myself, as well as other Transgender or Intersex persons, was diagnosed with (or have been diagnosed with) Gender Dysphoria. I, myself have went through the process of having an Evaluation for a pre-surgical Mental Health Letter to obtain "Gender Affirming Surgery". Being a transgender female who has been Diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria, I become very Depressed and mentally affected by my body (ie, Facial and Body hair, Not having Breasts, ect...). This effects my overall quality of life on a daily basis. I am a Female and want the right body parts.

Some Transgender and Intersex persons are so dysphoric over their bodies, they become so depressed they try to commit suicide, or become so desperate they resort to self mutilation. By Denying access to Gender Affirming Surgery, The CT D.O.C. has affected my Mental, Psychological, and physical wellbeing, and every day quality of life.

It should be noted and pointed out that our own State of Connecticut Health Insurance (HUSKY-D), covers and pays for both "Gender Affirming Medication (and) surgery". There is absolutely NO legitimate reason why The CT. D.O.C. can not or should not provide "Gender Affirming Medication (and) surgery" to transgender and Intersex persons who are incarcerated. New state Laws also reaffirm this.

I would like to propose and request a resolution to The Joint Committee on Judiciary in the form of a complete overhaul to both the CT. D.O.C. Administrative Directive 8.1 "Scope of Health Service Care" as well as the "Medical policy and procedure Manual" concerning the overall care of Transgender and Intersex persons who are incarcerated. To reflect our state's integrity and views that the protection, and rights, and opportunities of person who are Transgender and Intersex who are incarcerated are no less than those who are not incarcerated.

I propose that in doing so that the office of the ombudsman work with The CT D.O.C. Health/Medical Department, Executive Director of Inmate Medical Services (Dr. Craig G. Burns) to ensure the wellness and fairness, and to protect the rights of Transgender and Intersex persons who are incarcerated by providing Gender Affirming Care (Medications and surgeries).

I am only one voice of the many Transgender, and Intersex persons who is incarcerated in The CT D.O.C. I hope that my voice has been heard and that serious changes are made to stop the living hell and torture I have had to endure while being incarcerated. ✓

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this testimony.

Respectfully Submitted
Ms. Erika Amber-Marie Desire
Ms. Erika Amber-Marie Desire
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cc. Personal File
ombudsman's office