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Title:

Organization or Agency:

Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed

NA

Testimony:

The Veneer

The Veneer of prison, and what it stands for, has been held up as a safety net for American society. The idea of safer streets has an appeal that is undeniable to all communities. Mix in the prospect of rehabilitating that criminal element that would threaten a community, then shroud it under idea of justice being served and there we have a prison system that hides itself behind safety and security. A veneer.

But, veneers are meant to cover and conceal some unappealing truths. There is a reason Connecticut doesn't have a civilian oversight board embedded within the D.O.C., it's the truth of things outside of the public view.

Here are a few truths the public should know:

- 1) Poor ventilation has caused a stench that won't dissipate.
- 2) There is also an outbreak of drain flies, which wouldn't be that much of an issue if we didn't eat in the same area as the open showers, and toilets.
- 3) Every weekend there is a shortage of staff, which shuts down recreation, outside rec, and visits. (One would think sense it happens so frequently they would be prepared.)
- 4) Educational opportunities are being limited, examples are:
 - a - Under utilized classroom space, such as classrooms not being used on second shift in both school and vocational areas.
 - b - Under utilized computer access in both school and vocational areas.
 - c - Inadequate ventilation in the classrooms with ten or more students.
- 5) Shutting down visits without proper notice given to alert visitors. No consideration that most low income and working families have very limited opportunities to get to the prisons for a visit. This makes consistency important to these family when arranging transportation.
- 6) Certain areas of prisons has been labeled "the hood", or " the ghetto". Which only services to recreate the environment that lead to most people being incarcerated. These areas are often neglected, and deprived of the resources needed to begin the rehabilitation process.
- 7) Promotion of a sedentary life style and all the health issues that accompany sedentariness. Between multiple training days, lockdowns , and limited to no access to exercise equipment, sedentariness is the inevitable outcome.

These issues doesn't even begin to cover some of the uncomfortable truths about Connecticut prisons. The mental strain placed on incarcerated people and their loved ones by draconian policies are or should be widely known. And if not why aren't the hard questions being asked of our "voted" officials? Why isn't the question of suicide, overdoses, and mental health not being aggressively looked into? Where is that same accountability that is expected of incarcerated people when it comes to our prison officials?

In closing, solutions would only require legislators to demand progressive, practical, efficient, and effective policies. Policies that include input from real reformers, community based organizations, and educators. We need real oversight, because no amount of reforms will begin to address the real issues created by the carceral system if no one demands to see what goes on behind the veneer.