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Title:

Organization or Agency:

Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed

NA

Testimony:

There is many issues in the DOC that needs to be addressed, whether it be medical, commissary, tablets, the increasing aging elderly population and kitchen food.

Medical

The medical care given to us here in prison is woefully inadequate and gets worse with each passing year. You can go to medical for an ailment and if your lucking enough to see a doctor, that does not ensure you will receive treatment. If you need to see a specialist, it could take years to be seen. If you need medication, its not a guarantee you will receive it. The staff always down plays your need for medication and will initially deny you and make you fight them for it.

Being Elderly does not guarantee that you will be given treatment, most times your not treated any different than someone younger than you. Our needs become different as we grow older and we need more specific medical treatment than the younger men. And many elderly as they age and require full time care, are thrown into the infirmary, not given the adequate care they need and just left to die.

A review of the medical practice in these institutions needs to be conducted.

Commissary

First and foremost, our commissary prices are to expensive. Prices continue to go up on average of more than 50% each time they are raised. The Keefe company continues to be the sole supplier to the DOC and the quality of product sold is terrible and the prices overly inflated due to the fact they are the only game in town. We are not sold brand name products but pay brand name prices and higher.

And with the pay we receive its very hard to be able to even afford your cosmetic items you need for hygiene. Of the items sold to us, there is not enough healthy options and way to many sugary items that contribute to the obesity and diabetic issues among the men in here.

Tablets

The tablets we receive from Securus are refurbished tablets that are of very poor quality even when refurbished. The tablets are turned off at night at the end of the day and not turned on until the next morning when recreation begins. As I write this letter I am using my tablets function of a draft option. This is very useful when writing letters as this one, working on our legal work or preparing messages for the next day. But our tablets are turned off at night taking away this important asset in doing any work.

We only receive 10 stamps per day so the DOC's reasoning that they don't have the staff to review our messages during the night is not true because our people can still send messages through the night. So why can't our tablets stay on. I work a job that I get up at 5:30am to take the Vet Dog I have outside but I can't access my tablet for 3 hours. I then begin my work day at 8:30 in the morning so I can't access my tablet until hours later. This is a problem for many men in here that work jobs that begin before we are allowed access to our tablets not giving them the same privilege as others that don't work.

We only receive 10 stamps per day regardless of how many people we have on our contact list. Our people receive 75 stamps per day to just text us. This should be reviewed and take away some stamps from the people and use that to increase how many stamps we get. If we have 15 people on our contact list, I have to choose daily who I will and who I won't send a message to.

Also the prices that are charged for movies and music is excessively high. To rent a movie, its \$8:50 with tax for just 30 hours. Music is high priced also. Another issue in this facility, Corrigan C. C., the WIFI is terrible. Constantly through the evening we lose our WIFI signal often resulting in lost phone calls and access to our e message capability. You could lose several phone calls if you make your calls at night. When you lose the call due to the WIFI signal, you do not get that call back. This is a daily issue!

Aging Prison population

I have a separate letter regarding this issue that was submitted so I will briefly touch base on this. With the growing Elderly Prison population in Connecticut, the growing medical costs and specific needs that increase as we age, it would be cost effective for the State to consider Elderly Parole that other States are now offering. Men over the age of 55 years old "Age Out of Crime" so keeping the Elderly in prison well after they pose no threat to society is fiscally irresponsible.

The recidivism rate for those over 55 years old is less than 4% in comparison to 43% for all other demographics. I hope this committee will look into considering this beneficial and cost saving provision.

Kitchen food and cleanliness

The food we receive from the kitchen is of such a poor quality. We are served to much soy based and processed food. When they do add what I assume is a better quality of meat with the soy, they puree it into such small pieces that it blends in with the soy. And when they serve this soy meat with a sauce, they cover the rice or pasta with it forcing you to try and scrape it off if you don't want to eat it.

Out of a 28 day cycle, all you receive from the kitchen of non soy based meat is 2 meals of a chicken leg. Every other meat is either soy or processed meat. This does not make for a healthy diet. The quality and preparation also leaves alot to be desired. The portion size is never correct, the way the trays are prepared is sloppy and looks like it was just thrown together with everything in the tray mixed with each other.

And the kitchen area is filthy and never cleaned properly. If you do eat in the chow hall, you are not given the 20 minutes allotted to eat and if they choose to feed the people in the units by the facilities own choice, they call it feed back and your made to eat in your cell depriving you of your 20 minutes of "out of cell time" allotted for your proper amount of rec time.