

Name: Michelle Troconis

Title:

Organization or Agency:

Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed

NA

Testimony:

Written Testimony of Michelle Troconis

Correction Advisory Committee Public Hearing – July 30, 2026

Dear Members of the Correction Advisory Committee:

I am writing as a woman who has been incarcerated at York Correctional Institution for more than two years. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my experience and respectfully ask that the conditions affecting the women at York be examined and improved.

I would first like to acknowledge and thank the Office of the Correctional Ombudsman for its important work bringing attention to conditions within Connecticut's correctional facilities and helping preserve the dignity and basic rights of incarcerated individuals. The Ombudsman's efforts matter deeply to those of us who live inside these facilities.

I am currently housed in Building 3 South, Tier D. The concerns I describe below affect our health, dignity, ability to participate in education and programming, and ability to maintain a sense of normalcy and hope while incarcerated.

Showers and Basic Hygiene

At the moment, we have only one functioning shower for approximately 24 women on my tier. Many of us work in different areas of the prison and do not return at the same time. When we return from work, we may have only a short window to shower before count begins.

Once count is in effect, we are not permitted to shower. After count clears, some women have college courses or other programs until approximately 8:00 p.m. There is simply not enough time for everyone to access the one functioning shower.

As a result, some women can go as long as two days without being able to shower. Access to basic hygiene should not depend on the availability of functioning showers or whether a woman returns during a limited window of time.

Ventilation, Dust, and Mold

During my time at York, I have been moved between cells approximately every six to eight months. In every cell where I have lived, I have experienced problems with the ventilation system.

Dust and debris come out of the vents, making it difficult to breathe. Some vents appear clogged or inadequately maintained. I have also observed mold around or associated with ventilation areas. These conditions are particularly concerning because we spend so much time inside our cells and are continuously exposed to the air circulating through these systems.

In the winter, some cells are extremely cold because insufficient heat comes through the vents. I respectfully ask that the ventilation systems be properly inspected, cleaned, maintained, and evaluated for mold and other conditions that may affect the health of incarcerated women.

Food and Nutrition

The food provided is another serious concern. Many meals during the week consist primarily of highly processed foods with little nutritional value. Approximately four to five meals per week may be based on processed food products with little or no recognizable meat.

We frequently receive foods such as hot dogs, processed chicken products, and beef patties. One of the few less-processed meals, such as chicken on the bone, is provided only approximately every two weeks.

Vegetables are often overcooked, and fruit is sometimes spoiled. Food is essential to our health and well-being. The women incarcerated at York deserve meals that are nutritious, safe, and reasonably balanced.

Recreation and Access to Sunlight

Recreation time is also extremely limited. In my building, recreation may be limited to approximately 30 to 40 minutes on certain weekdays and approximately 50 minutes on Sundays. For many women, this is the only time they have access to sunlight and outdoor air.

Much of our recreation time is canceled without a clear explanation. The lack of consistent access to outdoor recreation and sunlight affects physical and mental well-being.

Lockdowns

Lockdowns are frequent, including those associated with correctional officer training.

When lockdowns occur, they can interfere with access to showers, recreation, education, work, programming, and mental-health services.

I understand that correctional facilities must maintain security and that training is necessary. However, there should be greater consideration of the cumulative impact that frequent lockdowns have on the women incarcerated at York.

Mental Health Care

Mental health is another serious concern. Many women at York struggle with significant mental-health challenges. I have witnessed women who are suffering and need consistent, appropriate, professional care.

There are concerns about a lack of sufficient mental-health professionals, access to care, continuity of treatment, and whether some women are receiving medications and treatment appropriate for their individual needs.

Mental-health care should not be treated as an afterthought. Many women enter the correctional system with significant trauma and mental-health needs, and incarceration itself can intensify those struggles. Access to qualified professionals and appropriate treatment is essential.

Access to Legal Resources

Access to legal resources also remains insufficient. Incarcerated individuals need meaningful access to library services and computer systems that allow them to review and work with the legal files and materials necessary to prepare for and participate effectively in their own legal proceedings.

Access to these resources is especially important for individuals who are representing themselves or who

need to actively assist their attorneys. The ability to prepare for one's own legal proceedings should not be unnecessarily hindered by inadequate access to essential legal resources.

Closing

I understand that correctional facilities have security requirements and that managing a large institution is complicated. I am not asking for the elimination of necessary security measures. I am asking for the basic conditions of life inside York Correctional Institution to be examined through the lens of human dignity.

The women incarcerated at York are still human beings. We are mothers, daughters, sisters, students, workers, and members of families and communities. Regardless of the circumstances that brought someone into the correctional system, every person deserves access to basic hygiene, clean and safe living conditions, adequate nutrition, sunlight and recreation, appropriate mental-health care, and meaningful access to legal resources.

I respectfully ask the Correction Advisory Committee to continue examining these conditions and support meaningful improvements at York Correctional Institution. Improving these conditions would benefit not only the women incarcerated there, but also correctional staff, the facility, and the broader goal of rehabilitation and successful reentry into society.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my experience and consider the concerns of the women living at York Correctional Institution.

Respectfully,

Michelle Troconis