

PENNSYLVANIA
PRISON SOCIETY
justice & compassion

To: Commissioner Blanche Carney
From: Claire Shubik-Richards, Pennsylvania Prison Society Executive Director
Regarding: CFCF Walkthrough, May 17, 2022
Date: June 16, 2022
Copied: Philadelphia County Government Officialsⁱ
Pennsylvania State Department of Corrections
Prison Society Board of Directors

This memorandum summarizes the Prison Society's walkthrough of Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility (CFCF) on May 17, 2022.

This walkthrough reinforced issues we have brought to your attention previously,ⁱⁱ including:

- Lack of staff supervision.
- Little access to programming, books, and in-cell activities.
- Delays in access to counseling and medical services.
- Limited access to cleaning supplies.
- Limited access to clean laundry.
- Limited access to basic hygiene items like toilet paper and soap.
- No refunds when commissary requests are not fulfilled.

In addition to the issues listed above, new issues that surfaced include:

- Reports of frequent staff assault.
- No access to the law library.
- Lack of inmate handbook distribution.
- Continued use of multi-purpose rooms for housing.

There were some improvements since our March 18 walkthrough of RCF and PICC:

- Increases in out of cell time.
- Improved access to phones and showers.
- More functioning phones in housing units.

Background

The Pennsylvania Prison Society serves as Pennsylvania's independent ombuds and monitor for county and state correctional facilities. On May 17, 2022, Prison Monitoring Director Noah Barth, and two Prison Society volunteersⁱⁱⁱ conducted a walkthrough of CFCF, escorted by Philadelphia Department of Prisons (PDP) staff.^{iv} The walkthrough included a tour of intake, medical, and three housing areas, and structured interviews with a total of 24 incarcerated people. All interviews were voluntary, anonymous, and interviewees were randomly selected. We interviewed six men at one RHU (Restricted Housing Unit, or “segregation”) through one-on-one conversations at their cell doors, and 19 men in two general population housing units either one-on-one or in small groups at tables.^v

Locked in Cells for Extended Periods with Nothing to Do

There’s nothing to do all day, I’m mentally strong but I feel myself slipping.

- Restricted housing resident

Every single person we interviewed reported they received less than three hours out of cell per day. Only two men reported being allowed out of their cells daily, but for 90 minutes a day. While the amount of out of cell time appears to have increased since our last walkthrough, it remains insufficient and inconsistently provided.

In previous responses to Prison Society memos, the PDP has stated that internal Department documentation states that people are consistently out of their cells for at least three hours every day. We have not reviewed this internal documentation and cannot speak to it directly.

That said, the comments offered by one man we spoke to at CFCF indicate that some of the documentation the Department uses to monitor out-of-cell time may be inaccurate. The man we spoke to explained that before men on his unit C1-1 are allowed out of their cells, staff require them to sign a log attesting that they are going out of their cell. They sign this log before they know how long they will be out. Once everyone on the unit has signed, some people are released from their cells, others are not, and the time out of the cell varies.

Many men we interviewed reported that out of cell time is worse on the weekends, “nothing happens on the weekends” said one man. Three separate groups of men



we interviewed in general population all stated that they had been locked in their cells from Thursday through Monday over Mother's Day weekend. One man said that the small group interview with our monitor was the most time he had spent in group conversation since his arrival in prison.

During our walkthrough we observed a "multipurpose room" currently being used to house four men. Multipurpose rooms are located in the corner of housing units and are designed for meetings, counseling sessions, and other activities. In many units they have been converted into cells where four men are housed with insufficient space, no window, a door lock that cannot be opened remotely, and poor sight lines for staff. One of our escorts from PDP leadership told our team twice that the majority of violence and other incidents occur in these rooms, and he would like to see their use discontinued immediately.

Every man we interviewed reported a lack of prison provided in-cell activities to keep themselves occupied. This is an issue we have previously reported on in-depth. One man in a restricted housing unit stated, "there's nothing to do all day, I'm mentally strong but I feel myself slipping." Another man in the same unit said, "when mental health people come around, they bring books and puzzles, maybe once a month if that." It was not clear to him who was receiving materials, why others were not, and if there was any schedule or protocol. No one we spoke with in the general population units reported receiving any in-cell activities from the PDP.

Every man we interviewed in general population stated they could not access the law library. One man said that law library access is only provided twice a week to two people for twenty minutes and that it seems to be the same people every time. Two other men we interviewed said regarding the law library "I haven't been there since covid" and, "I think I seen it open three times since covid." They reported having been in PDP custody for four years and for 27 months, respectively. One man in restricted housing said that he can access the law library via a computer kiosk but that no such access exists in general population.

Lack of Staff Supervision

No, they don't barely come to work. If they do come, they don't run rec.

- General population resident

They're in the bubble and they don't care.

- General population resident



(When staff) head count they don't actually go 'round, just count from the bubble so wouldn't know if there's an issue.

- General population resident

Lack of staff presence inside housing units was a common issue reported during this walkthrough as well as in previous walkthroughs.

Twenty out of 21 people we asked stated that corrections staff are not available in the evenings. One man said "no, they're not on the block." Another man reported "not at all, they don't come around to do tours."

Nineteen out of 21 people we asked stated that corrections staff are similarly unavailable on the weekends. One man said "no, they don't barely come to work. If they do come, they don't run rec." Another man reported "it's bad, that's usually when we don't get out." Another man stated, "they're in the bubble and they don't care," indicating staff are stationed in a central control area outside of the unit. Another man stated that when staff "head count they don't actually go 'round, just count from the bubble so wouldn't know if there's an issue."

Twenty of the 22 people we asked reported that prison staff do not respond to in-cell buzzers. One man said, "depending on who it is, if they feel like it, yeah. But if they don't feel like working that day, no." Another man stated, "you can ring it 100 times, but they don't come." A third man reported "they don't be responding to that. They turn it off or they ignore it"

One man we interviewed in a restricted housing unit reported a lack of buzzer response during medical emergencies. He stated that he has a diagnosed condition that causes seizures, and on three occasions he experienced seizures while locked in his cell and received no staff response despite ringing his buzzer and calling for help. He similarly said that staff would not take him to the medical unit in the days following these incidents when he requested an evaluation.

In Unit C1-1 we attempted to test the buzzer system to see if it was functional. One incarcerated man went to his cell and rang his buzzer multiple times while we monitored the switch board. There was no ring or alert. When questioned about how the system worked, one of our escorts from PDP leadership explained that there is a ring, and a little blue dot appears on the switch board next to the corresponding cell where the buzzer was rung. The officer then clears the alert dot on the board and walks over to the cell to address the relevant concern. Our PDP escort confirmed that a cell cannot buzz the desk again, until a previous alert has been cleared. When



we looked at the board nearly every cell had an uncleared blue dot next to it. Our escort confirmed that in the current state, the staff would not receive any alerts if a person rang their in-cell buzzer.

Access to Medical Care and Counseling Services

They don't answer sick call slips.

- General population resident

That's the hardest thing, a lot of people in the hole try to see medical but they don't have enough guards to take us. Say 'if he's not bleeding, leave him.' I was spitting up blood all month but medical would not see me.

- Restricted housing resident

My brother died two weeks ago, and I asked to see someone but still no one's come to speak with me.

- General population resident

Sixteen out of 22 people we asked reported seeking medical care and having to wait over a week. One man we spoke to stated "it's getting better, but it was at least 2-3 weeks" to be seen. Another man we spoke with said that he had been waiting to see medical staff since he arrived at the jail 20 months prior. One man stated, "they don't answer sick call slips," while another said that the box to collect sick call slips was filled to the top and had just been removed when our group arrived at the unit.

Access to medical care was an acute concern for the men we spoke to in restricted housing. One man there stated "that's the hardest thing, a lot of people in the hole try to see medical but they don't have enough guards to take us. (They) say 'if he's not bleeding, leave him.' I was spitting up blood all month but medical would not see me." The man in restricted housing who reported a lack of care for seizures also said "I have seizures, if I need to go to medical, I can't get a response, I can't get no help from nobody. If I have a seizure and the guard doesn't feel like taking me, I'm stuck." He stated that his anti-seizure medication had run out two weeks prior, and he was concerned that his blood pressure was similarly running out and he has received no response to his medical request slips. We shared his name, PPI#, and details of his situation with our escorts from PDP leadership.

Of the 18 men we spoke to who reported trying to see a social worker, 16 reported waiting for a week or longer to be seen. One man said that the social worker comes



to their unit once a month and stands by the staff desk without doing rounds. He stated, “it’d be by chance if you saw her.” Another man in the same unit reported that the assigned social worker is responsible for four housing blocks as a possible explanation for the infrequency of her presence. This stands in contradiction to the inmate handbook, page 26 which states “Your Social Service Work Case Manager visits his/her assigned housing unit(s) every day.”

In another general population unit, one man said that social workers come “once a week, twice a week, whenever they feel like goin’ on the block.” Another man we interviewed in the same unit stated, “my brother died two weeks ago, and I asked to see someone but still no one’s come to speak with me.”

While several men we spoke to reported access to a Christian Chaplain, one man in general population said, “I seen the Imam once in the past six months.”

Limited Access to Cleaning Supplies, Laundry, and Hygiene Items

Noooo, we gotta steal to get it (cleaning supplies).

- General population resident

Six months same sheets, everybody goes months with the same sheets.

- General population resident

We gotta wash them (clothes) ourselves in the toilet where we shit at.

- General population resident

They don’t clean the showers, people get staph, I got seven boils since I been here.

- General population resident

We only came out once in two weeks, so I only showered once.

- Restricted housing resident

Twenty-two out of 24 people we asked reported an inability to access cleaning supplies to keep their cells clean. One man, when asked if he can access cleaning supplies, replied “noooo, we gotta steal to get it.” Another man in the unit showed us an improvised rag he had made from one of his towels. He said that he used it with toilet water to wash his cell. Another man said, “every once in a while, we get it



(cleaning supplies), but it's hit and miss." In restricted housing, one man's response to whether he receives cleaning supplies was simply "hell no."

Laundry is another hygiene-related issue that was raised in most interviews. Twenty-three of the 24 men we asked reported not receiving clean sheets on a weekly basis as required by the inmate handbook Section II, page 13.

One man we interviewed in general population Unit C1-1 said that a laundry cart "come(s) in the morning but nobody hears it. I've had the same sheets for a year. They come between three and four o'clock at night between Tuesday and Wednesday. If you're not up, you don't get any" fresh sheets. The other men in the group corroborated this story adding that no announcement is made and a feeling that the people with the cart were intentionally "sneaking by." This version of events was independently reported by the two other groups we interviewed in this unit.

One man in general population said, "six months, same sheets, everybody goes months with the same sheets." The other men in the same interview group reported the time that they had gone with the same sheets for: two months, three months, three months, four months, and six months, respectively. One man we interviewed in another general population unit said, "we need sheets, it's been like a good three months." In restricted housing, one man when asked how often he receives clean sheets said, "they don't come around at all."

Twenty-three of the 24 men similarly reported not receiving clean clothes on a weekly basis. One man said, "no that's worse, (we get) only one set of blues (i.e. his prison uniform) and they don't change it." When asked about underwear, undershirts, and socks, he replied "we gotta wash them ourselves in the toilet where we shit at." The other six men in the group nodded in agreement. In restricted housing one man laughed, shook his head and replied "we don't get nothing. Clothes? No."

We asked 21 men about access to basic hygiene items such as soap and toilet paper. Sixteen reported not receiving a sufficient quantity. The men we interviewed in general population consistently reported receiving one roll of toilet paper and one bar of soap per week, to be shared by both men in a cell. One man added that staff "usually distribute on Wednesday but sometimes they skip it." In contrast, in our walkthrough of RCF men reported receiving two rolls of toilet paper per cell per week and we have received no complaints about insufficient access to toilet paper. Access to showers, and the condition of shower stalls was another hygiene issue men brought up. One man in general population stated, "they don't clean the



showers, people get staph, I got seven boils since I been here,” and pulled up his pants leg to reveal several. Another man in the same unit reported that one shower had been broken since his arrival seven months prior. The six other men in the interview group corroborated this. In restricted housing, one man said regarding shower access “when they run rec we get them, then we only came out once in two weeks, so I only showered once.”

Multiple Problems with Commissary; No Refunds When Items Are Missing

Twenty out of the 24 men we asked reported paying for commissary items and not receiving them or receiving a refund. One man stated receiving refunds, “takes a month but you get it.” Another man reported waiting for eight months for a refund. In restricted housing, one man said, “my family had to contact the Commissioner to get a refund, they owed me \$500.”

The men we interviewed reported various other frustrations and confusion regarding the commissary system. One group of seven men in general population stated that they could only order size large underwear and that the items in the catalog they are given do not match an updated list on the order form. One man in general population showed us a commissary receipt where all six items he purchased including hand soap were marked as “unauthorized item.” He said that he has received neither the items nor a refund.

Violence

We locked down, then come out and bumrush the phones, that’s when the fights happen. That’s how they want it.

- General population resident

People are just frustrated, they’re locked down, can’t talk to their lawyers, can’t use the law library. I feel like if we were allowed out more, there wouldn’t be so many fights.

- General population resident

They will stomp you the fuck out. It’s mostly the white shirts (senior officers), they come right in here with mace out and start shoving people.

- General population resident

All 24 people we asked reported seeing fights at CFCF during their detention. Men in all three housing units stated that fights were a result of limited time out of cell and limited access to phone calls. One man said, “we locked down, then come out and



bumrush the phones, that's when the fights happen. That's how they want it." Another man similarly stated, "people are just frustrated, they're locked down, can't talk to their lawyers, can't use the law library. I feel like if we were allowed out more, there wouldn't be so many fights." A third interviewee said plainly "it's always the phones."

One man stated, "it's an entertainment system for them, watching fights over the phones from the bubble." Another man in the same unit said that staff would regularly let them out of their cells unsupervised in order to watch them fight.

Twenty-two out of 23 people asked stated they had directly experienced or witnessed physical assault from staff. One man when asked about staff assault said, "what?! Every day! All day, every day." Another man in the same unit stated "they will stomp you the fuck out. It's mostly the white shirts (i.e. senior officers), they come right in here with mace out and start shoving people." One man, when asked about staff assault said, "yeah all the time, C.O.s and white shirts, they spray you for anything." One man in restricted housing reported, "it's very very common, they just don't care.... (they use their) hands, pepper spray, walkie talkies."

Other Issues

There are no grievance papers and now we're told we can only put one issue per slip and if we put more, they'll throw them out.

- General population resident

In addition to the questions we asked in our structured interviews, other issues were raised by the men in custody. When we showed a group of seven men in general population a copy of the inmate handbook and asked if they received a copy, they immediately squinted and craned their necks to see what it was. None of the seven men reported receiving a copy at intake and all were immediately eager to study it.

We did not ask specific questions about tablet access and video visits. Men we spoke to in both of the general housing units we visited reported concerns about them. In Unit C2-4 we were told that there are only two tablets provided for video visits during recreation time when 40 men are allowed out for two hours. It was the men's understanding that there are supposed to be four tablets for the unit. They reported that the current situation results in a near total lack of access which can lead to fights. Men we interviewed in Unit C1-1 shared the same set of concerns.



All seven men in one interview group reported receiving the COVID-19 vaccine while in PDP custody, but only one reported receiving the promised commissary bag incentive.

One man stated, “there are no grievance papers and now were told we can only put one issue per slip and if we put more, they’re throw them out.”

Recommendations

Eighteen people died in the Philadelphia prisons in 2021, three of them murdered. At least four people have died in 2022. The conditions we detail in this memo and in the ones that preceded it, are unsafe for people in custody and unsafe for staff.

It has been more than a year since the Prison Society started documenting these preventable tragedies. It has been two months since the City hired former Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel to help address this crisis. Decisive action to end this human suffering is long-overdue.

We respectfully request that the City make public Secretary Wetzel’s initial findings and recommendations before summer’s end.

The ongoing crisis at the City’s correctional facilities is the confluence of too few correctional staff, administrative inefficiencies resulting in people staying in jail longer than is needed, and serious physical plant and management problems. We are hopeful that, with Secretary Wetzel’s leadership, the City will consider:

- Utilizing national guard and/or contracted temporary staff to address critical staffing shortages and specifically medical staffing shortages.
- Temporarily leasing space in other, nearby facilities with excess capacity. It is our understanding that Dauphin County is exploring this as an option.
- Working with the criminal legal stakeholders to address the administrative inefficiencies that keep the jail population excessively high, such as the time to Gagnon One hearings, the time to Early Bail Review, the time for transportation to state facilities, court continuances, and the delays associated with the court process for individuals who are arrested while under community supervision.

The Prison Society does not call on the city to undertake any one of these solutions, but rather to thoughtfully consider them all. Each one may have important drawbacks, but at the same time, each one may lead to safer facilities, and a safer Philadelphia.



While these are the type of big initiatives needed to end the crisis, there are other measures immediately available that will help ameliorate the degrading and dangerous conditions that persist.

It is notable that three of the problems identified in our walkthroughs – broken phones, access to tablets and programming on tablets, and commissary – are all services the Department contracts out for. Presumably, the City can hold these contracted, for-profit providers accountable for a basic level of service provision.

Locked in Cells for Extended Periods with Nothing to Do

- Individuals in general housing should be permitted out of their cells at least twice a day and for longer periods of time.
- The City of Philadelphia should provide daily activities that can be conducted while in a cell, such as books, puzzles, or ebooks. Approaches to consider include:
 - Providing ebooks, games, and other programming on the GTL prison tablets, similar to what Allegheny County, Berks County, and the PA DOC have done. To do this equitably, Philadelphia would need to purchase enough tablets to enable every resident to have a few hours with a tablet each day. These tablets will be used well beyond the pandemic. If possible, Philadelphia may wish to consider an alternative tablet provider that has more extensive educational programming at less cost to the incarcerated patron.
 - Weekly distribution of hard-copy activity books or magazines, similar to the puzzle books the Prison Society donated to the Department of Prisons at the Prison Society's expense in 2021.
- Immediately resume library and law library access for all incarcerated individuals.
- Senior staff should periodically make unannounced housing unit tours during all shifts to monitor if recreation time is being provided.

Lack of Staff Supervision

- Staff should be assigned and present inside each housing unit, 24 hours a day.
- Staff distribution should be prioritized so that calls for help or rings from an in-cell buzzer are always responded to.
- Immediately end the use of multi-purpose rooms as living areas.



Access to Medical Care and Counseling Services

- Identify and address hurdles for getting requests for medical care processed and responded to in a reasonable time.
- Identify and address hurdles for getting requests for counselors processed and responded to in a reasonable time.
- Closely review and monitor the completion of daily housing unit visits by assigned Social Service Case Managers.
- Expedite hiring for any Social Service Case Manager vacancies.

Limited Access to Cleaning Supplies, Laundry, and Hygiene Items

- Immediately increase access to cleaning supplies.
- Ensure that linens and other laundry are being washed and distributed on a weekly basis as required by the inmate handbook, Section II, page 13.
- Provide an adequate supply of toilet paper and soap to all men at CFCF.

Multiple Problems with Commissary; No Refunds When Items Are Missing

- Audit all aspects of the commissary process including making sure commissary menus are up to date, refunds are prompt, and communications with incarcerated people around their commissary accounts are easy to understand and that incarcerated people can easily ask questions and receive answers about their accounts.

Other Issues

- Distribute inmate handbooks throughout every housing unit in the prison system.
- Implement and supervise a system for equitable tablet and phone access in each unit. This can be a simple sign-up sheet with time limits.
- Increase access to video visits by purchasing more tablets (see above).

Thank you once again for facilitating this walkthrough. The Prison Society is a partner in ensuring the health, safety, and dignity of Philadelphians in prison custody.

We would appreciate a written response to this memorandum within two weeks of receipt. Thank you for this opportunity to be of service.



We look forward to scheduling a walkthrough of the Detention Center, ASD and Mod-3 for July.

ⁱ Greg Vrato, Philadelphia Department of Prisons, Chief of Staff
John Wetzel, Philadelphia Department of Prisons, Consultant
Jim Engler, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Tumar Alexander, Managing Director
Vanessa Garrett Harley, First Deputy Managing Director
Members of City Council
Rebecca Rhynhart, Controller
Diana Cortes, City Solicitor
Larry Krasner, District Attorney
Keisha Hudson, Chief Defender
Alexander DeSantis, Inspector General
Idee Fox, President Judge, Court of Common Pleas
Lisette Shirdan-Harris, Administrative Judge, Court of Common Pleas
Joffie Pittman, Supervising Judge, Municipal Court
Lucretia Clemons, Supervising Judge of Criminal Trials
Patrick Dugan President Judge, Municipal Court
Philadelphia Prison Advisory Board
Office of Governor Wolf
Philadelphia members of the Pennsylvania Legislature
Josh Shapiro, Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General
Ilana Eisenstein DLA Piper
Thomas Greishaw, PA DOC

ⁱⁱ <https://www.prisonersociety.org/reports-fact-sheets>

ⁱⁱⁱ Andrea Striepen and Aiden King

^{iv} Chief of Staff Vrato, Deputy-Commissioner Beaufort, Deputy-Warden Angelucci, Deputy-Warden Rose, and Communications Coordination Mitchell

^v Restricted housing unit A1-3; general population units C1-1 and C2-4





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Blanche Carney, MSS, CCM
Commissioner

July 6, 2022

Claire Shubik-Richards
Executive Director
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230 S. Broad St., Suite 605
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Ms. Shubik-Richards,

As requested, I am writing in response to your June 16 correspondence concerning the Philadelphia Department of Prisons (PDP). Your letter is based on the Prison Society's walkthrough of the Curran Fromhold Correctional Facility (CFCF) on May 17, 2022.

As stated in previous responses, specific detailed information on the summarized concerns presented in your memorandum would allow for investigation and appropriate follow up. As you know, the Prison Society has a well-established mechanism in place for receiving complaints from our incarcerated population and forwarding those same complaints to our Office of Community Justice & Outreach (CJO) for proper investigation and response.

This established mechanism, which the Prison Society has consistently used since the CJO's inception, is the best conduit to report concerns, and provides the information needed for the CJO to provide an appropriate response, while ensuring that there is no reprisal for the incarcerated person making the complaint. This mechanism has been in place since 2003 and has been instrumental in providing transparency and proper tracking of complaints.

PDP continues to work on every aspect of providing a clean, healthy, and safe environment for our incarcerated population while ensuring that they receive proper time out of their cells with access to services and activities.

"Locked in Cells for Extended Periods with Nothing to Do." Without detailed information, we are unable to address this specifically. However, answering broadly, PDP constantly strives to increase out of cell time, and, due to strategic placement of recently graduated cadet classes, we have been able to increase our out of cell time accordingly. We are consistently at or above four (4) hours of out of cell time per day in all facilities. We are constantly striving to

increase that time, and, when possible, housing units in all facilities are exceeding four (4) hours of out of cell time.

It is troubling that some of the men you interviewed reported they spent time in their cells with “nothing to do.” As stated in previous responses, our incarcerated population has access to tablets upon request. Televisions run on the housing units until late evening. And individuals incarcerated in our facilities have the right to have books and crossword puzzles in their cells. Library access is also available. As noted in your memorandum, one interviewee acknowledged that his housing unit is able to go twice a week.

As for the concern regarding usage of multi-occupancy rooms for housing, these rooms have been used for housing at CFCF since its inception. These rooms are much larger than a traditional CFCF cell designed for two incarcerated individuals. The usage of a multi-occupancy room allows the PDP to avoid triple celling individuals in a cell designed for two people. Multi-occupancy rooms allow for each incarcerated person to have their own bunk. Further, there is no indication that there is any greater risk of violence from those housed in a multi-occupancy room compared to those housed in a two-person cell.

“Lack of Staff Supervision.” Your memo raises staffing concerns, especially in the evening and weekends. We have worked to ensure that there is an officer on every housing unit, no matter how staff challenged we may be at a given time. Your memo states that 20 of the 22 people interviewed during the walkthrough reported that PDP staff does not respond to the call buzzer system. The system’s design prevents multiple cells simultaneously flooding the console. Rather, it is programmed so that each call to the console must be addressed/cleared by the housing officer before another call/buzz can be made. One can easily imagine possible misuse of the system if multiple call/buzzes were allowed at once. As was observed during the trial run, the system is operating as designed. In a real-life situation, the housing officer would address the first call/buzz received and clear it for others. As you noted, “when we looked at the board nearly every cell had an uncleared blue dot next to it.” That demonstrates that in a real-life situation, the housing officer can easily identify if multiple cells were attempting to call/buzz and would know to respond/call for assistance accordingly.

“Access to Medical Care and Counseling Services.” PDP has continued to increase medical staff and ensuring that there is proper access to medical care. The increase in medical staff has been beneficial as both sick call slips and medical grievances are responded to promptly. We will continue to ensure that all housing units have an ample supply of sick call slips. Regarding access to social workers and chaplains, we continuously strive to ensure that our incarcerated population has timely access to services, including religious services. There has been continued improvement in all areas.

“Limited Access to Cleaning Supplies, Laundry and Hygiene Items.” PDP has routinely ensured weekly access to laundry services and cleaning supplies throughout the pandemic. We continue to do so. If any incarcerated individual is truthfully doing the things claimed in this section, it is not because of a lack of access to laundry, clean clothes, or cleaning supplies.

“Multiple Problems with Commissary, No Refunds When Items are Missing.” Here especially, details of specific incidents are required for successful follow up. Specific information allows for record checks, and, if warranted, correcting the problem, and compensating individuals accordingly. Indeed, even some of the individuals you interviewed, acknowledged that they received refunds when warranted. As you are aware, on a previous tour, a print-out you provided from an incarcerated individual who claimed that he had not been compensated for commissary, clearly indicated that he had, indeed, been compensated. Based on that previous complaint, we have made the commissary forms easier to read and understand. PDP will continue to review and monitor our grievance process to ensure that there are prompt and clear responses regarding refunds and any other issues regarding commissary orders.

“Violence.” Unfortunately, violence does occur within correctional settings. Our staff responds to violence as quickly as possible to quell the situation. Every violent incident is reviewed. If there are findings that staff acted improperly, or not according to policy, appropriate actions are taken.

“Other Issues.” This section notes that several incarcerated individuals you spoke with indicated they had not received the Inmate Handbook. The Inmate Handbook is provided to all newly admitted incarcerated individuals as part of the intake process. If the name/PP# of these individuals was provided, we could ensure that another copy of the Inmate Handbook is provided to them.

This section also references complaints regarding access to tablets. As stated previously, well over 500,000 video visit calls have been conducted since the inception of our tablets in November of 2020. Further, we are in the midst of expanding the use of tablets on our housing units throughout all facilities.

The incentive program has been an effective tool in our Covid-19 vaccination efforts. However, your letter references that only one out of seven men interviewed reported they received the commissary incentive bag following vaccination. These claims have been made previously, and upon investigation, it was learned that they did in fact receive the incentive bag. Once again, I encourage you to report these incidents according to the CJO process, so that we can respond accordingly.

Lastly, one interviewee reported that “there are no grievance papers and now we’re told we can only put one issue per slip and if we put more, they’ll throw them out.” If known, please provide the name of the staff member who allegedly made the statement so that it can be investigated and addressed. The grievance process is continuously reviewed and monitored. Pursuant to that continuous review and monitoring, we will ensure that all housing units have an ample supply of grievance forms.

“Recommendations”. Please know that safety is of paramount importance to me and my staff. We do everything we can to prevent the death of any incarcerated individual. Unfortunately, we have experienced 4 fatalities halfway through the year. While even one death is too many, that is a rate well below the number of fatalities in pre-pandemic years and among the lowest

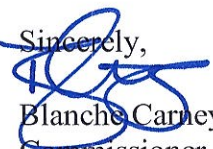
yearly totals in the last twenty years. This would indicate that through our continued efforts, overall conditions are improving.

As mentioned in your letter, the City has contracted with former Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel as part of our reform efforts. We look forward to Mr. Wetzel's recommendations and support. His initial findings and recommendations will be reported in the near future.

A previous recommendation for utilizing the national guard and/or contracted temporary staff is again mentioned in your correspondence. We acknowledge that we are staff challenged and are working continuously to hire correctional officers. However, we do not see the need for the national guard at this time, as we are continuously onboarding new hires and strategically assigning staff to our facilities. We will continue to do so to fill vacancies. Leasing space from other facilities is problematic as those other facilities are also staffed challenged and have similar or more emergent needs than what we are experiencing. Additionally, we continue to see a slight, steady decrease in our population.

Regarding the recommendation to "work with the criminal legal stakeholders," we have continuously worked with the courts and our other criminal justice partners to increase access to court hearings for our incarcerated population. It was through our exhaustive efforts that a protocol was developed which allowed for great expansion in the number of incarcerated individuals able to be transported for court hearings each day. As a result, we have seen a decrease in our population that will hopefully continue.

Many of your other recommendations and concerns have been addressed in previous responses. I will ensure that all aspects of our operations and services are continuously reviewed and monitored. Again, I encourage you to utilize the established mechanism of forwarding Prison Society complaints to the PDP's Office of Community Justice & Outreach, so that concerns can be tracked and addressed.

Sincerely,

Blanche Carney, MSS, CCM
Commissioner

cc: John Wetzel, Consultant
Tumar Alexander, Managing Director
James Engler, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Members of City Council
Diana Cortez, City Solicitor
Keisha Hudson, Chief Defender
Larry Krasner, District Attorney
Rebecca Rynhart, Controller
Alexander DeSantis, Inspector General
Idee Fox, President Judge, Court of Common Pleas

Lisette Shirdan-Harris, Administrative Judge, Court of Common Pleas
Joffie Pittman, Supervising Judge, Municipal Court
Lucretia Clemons, Supervising Judge of Criminal Trials
Patrick Dugan, President Judge, Municipal Court
Philadelphia Prison Advisory Board
Office of Governor Wolf
Philadelphia Members of the Pennsylvania Legislature
Josh Shapiro, Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General
Illana Eisenstein, DLA Piper
Thomas Greishaw, PA DOC