



To: Commissioner Blanche Carney

From: Claire Shubik-Richards, Pennsylvania Prison Society Executive Director

Regarding: CFCF Prison Tour, June 3rd 2021

Date: July 13, 2021

Copied: Greg Vrato, Philadelphia Department of Prisons, Chief of Staff
Tumar Alexander, Managing Director
Vanessa Garrett Harley, First Deputy Managing Director
Jim Engler, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Members of City Council
Diana Cortes, City Solicitor
Alan Tauber, Acting Chief Defender
Larry Krasner, District Attorney
Rebecca Rhynhart, Controller
Alexander DeSantis, Inspector General
Philadelphia members of the Pennsylvania Legislature
Ilana Eisenstein and Joe Baker, DLA Piper
Prison Society Board of Directors

Thank you for arranging the Pennsylvania Prison Society's walkthrough of the Curran Fromhold Correctional Facility (CFCF) on June 3, 2021. We greatly appreciated your team's time and the open communication with senior staff.

We have organized this memo into two sections:

The first section details our observations from our walkthrough of housing areas and our interviews with ten men in custody at the facility.

The second section provides recommendations for your consideration based on our observations and interviews.

Background

The Pennsylvania Prison Society serves as Pennsylvania's independent ombuds and monitor for county and state correctional facilities.

This March and April, once Society staff and volunteers were fully vaccinated, we scheduled walkthroughs of all prisons in Southeastern Pennsylvania. These walkthroughs were designed to give us a sense of conditions in individual facilities after 14 months of absence due to the pandemic. In addition to seeing the physical plant, all walkthroughs involved structured interviews with people in custody to record their experience and opinions.

In April 2021, the Philadelphia Department of Prisons declined our request for a walkthrough. That same month, the number of complaints that the Society received about the Philadelphia prisons doubled. The majority of these complaints related to CFCF. In May, the number of complaints received increased again by over two-thirds. That same month Christopher Hinkle became the fifth man to be killed while in the custody of the Philadelphia Prisons since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The murders and increasing volume of complaints created an additional sense of urgency in conducting a facility walkthrough at CFCF. It was out of that urgency that we sent the Philadelphia Department of Prisons a letter, dated May 26th, 2021 reiterating our request to conduct a walkthrough. We appreciated the Department's prompt response and prompt accommodation of our second request.

On June 3rd, 2021, Prison Society Executive Director Claire Shubik-Richards, Prison Monitoring Director Noah Barth, and volunteer prison monitors Yvonne Newkirk and Andrea Striepen participated in a multi-hour walkthrough of CFCF, escorted by Deputy Commissioner Clark, Deputy Warden Rose, Chief of Staff Vrato, and Lieutenant Reed. Supervising and line staff greeted and spoke with us at the different areas visited. We toured the kitchen, receiving and processing areas, and medical unit. We observed pods in housing units B1, C1, and C2 from the centralized observation areas and toured the interior of a pod in C4. We spoke with ten incarcerated men from one pod in B1 and two pods in C1. We conducted these interviews in private, using staff offices and multi-purpose rooms. These conversations occurred in pairs with two incarcerated people speaking with two Society representatives at one time. Our staff escorts brought us to all sections of the facility that we requested, gave us time and privacy to speak with people in custody, and answered most of our questions.



I. Observations from the June 3rd walkthrough and interviews

Locked in Cells for Extended Periods Without Staff Supervision.

In the majority of the 15+ housing pods that we observed, men were locked in their cells and no staff were present in the pods. These pods were completely silent. There were two or more staff in the central observation area (i.e. "bubble") that serves as the hub from which the pods are spokes. From this central area the staff could look into the common area of the pods through glass but could not directly look into cells.

In a few pods, we observed groups of 5-12 men out of their cells, talking on the phone or in small groups. In one pod, two men were getting a haircut. In another, one man was in the common area cleaning.

At our request, we interviewed six men in housing unit B1 and four men in housing unit C1. C1, is a general population area housing men who are fully vaccinated. Deputy Commissioner Clark explained to us that B1 serves as a quarantine and intake unit while individuals are classified and before they join the general population. We were told by the Deputy Commissioner that, pre-pandemic, men were typically housed in this unit for four days or less. Due to COVID-19, men are now in B1 a minimum of 14 days as a quarantine measure, but occasionally stay longer while space is made available. Two of the men we spoke with in B1 and two we spoke with in C1 told us that people were frequently housed on B1 for a month or longer.

In B1, the six men we spoke with all stated that they are typically allowed out of their cells once or twice a day for 45-60 minutes at a time. One man, reflecting on the impact of being in a small cell with a cellmate for 22-23 hours a day, said, "When we come out, people are ready to fight." Two of the men in B1 noted that it was inconsistent who was allowed out of their cell and when.

In C1, the four men we spoke with reported that some days they were out of their cells three times a day for 60-90 minutes at a time, other days they were out only one or two times a day depending on staffing levels. One man said, "There are still days nobody is allowed (out) at all, like this past Sunday." Two men in C1 also reported that there was variability in who is allowed out and when. One man stated, "It's random, sometimes guards will open four cells. Sometimes eight. It totally depends on which guard."



Men in both B1 and C1 reported that they regularly go hours without seeing a correctional officer. Several men noted that the absence of correctional staff appeared to be worse on the weekends. One man in B1 reported having an asthma attack at night. This man stated that he repeatedly rang an in-cell buzzer and banged on the door in order to get staff assistance, but no staff responded. Another resident of B1 shared that he has a blood pressure condition requiring nightly check-ups from staff, but the visits have been inconsistent.

At our request, we were permitted to enter pod C4. When we entered the pod it was completely silent. While we quickly walked the perimeter of the pod, men inside their cells noticed us and started to yell. By the time we left the pod, one or two minutes after entering, it sounded as though men were screaming from the majority of cells. They were uniformly screaming for "contact visits" or "family visits."

No In Person Family Visits. Limited Access to Phones and Video Calls.

At the time of our walkthrough, 19 Pennsylvania county prisons and three state prisons had reopened to family visiting. The Philadelphia Department of Prisons had not resumed family visits.

All 10 men we spoke with stated they had limited access to phones and tablets for video calls. Men in B1 reported that approximately 30 men are allowed out of their cells at a time. For the 45-60 minutes they are out of their cells, 30 men have access to four tablets and six phones. Men in B1 reported waiting days for a turn to use the phone or tablet, and having limited time when they do get a turn. One man stated that he has been trying to make arrangements with his family to pay his bail, but lack of phone access has made this difficult. Another stated that he has been waiting for two days to use the phone to call his attorney.

Men in C1 reported that one phone on their pod had been broken for months. As a result, they usually have access to five phones and three tablets. Two of the men we spoke with on C1, however, reported that all of the tablets on their pod were currently broken. When they do have access to video visits on the tablets, the quality varies. Some men reported it was fine, while one man in C1 told us it was "garbage poor," adding that the sound goes in and out making it very difficult to communicate. Attorneys from the Defenders Association have also reported to the Prison Society that the video quality can be extremely poor, making it difficult to actually meet with and serve a client.

Some of the men we interviewed referenced sign-up sheets for phone and tablet access and a fairly orderly system for determining who could use these resources.



Two men from C1 we spoke with, however, reported frequent fights in their pod related to phone and tablet access.

Reported communication gaps in phone and video access were mirrored in the postal mail system. In C1, all four men we spoke with said that they could send mail but that it was only picked up once a week. They reported that the pod's mailbox is currently overflowing with letters piling up on the floor. All four men in C1 reported that they have not received any mail. One man in C1 stated he was waiting for books sent by his family through amazon.com. His family has told him that the tracking information shows they were delivered three weeks ago.

Little Access to Programming, Books, and In-Cell Activities.

All the men we interviewed reported a lack of access to books or activities while they are locked in their cells. Two men in B1 told us that they cannot access Bibles, Qurans, or other religious texts. Two other men B1 reported that a correctional officer had taken it upon herself to make photocopies of crossword puzzles for them, but this was their only entertainment and it only happened once. One of the men in C1 we spoke with said that he was able to purchase a deck of playing cards from the commissary.

The experience of these men is in contrast to the experience of people incarcerated in other Pennsylvania prisons during extended shelter in place orders. During extended shelter in place orders in state facilities, and at some county facilities including the Allegheny County Jail, correctional staff have provided access to televisions, tablets with books or other programming on them, puzzles, cards, magazines, and other reading material.

Delays in Access to Medical Care and Counselling.

Three men reported delays in accessing medical care. One man in C1 stated that he has been waiting since February for a medical visit, and when he questioned medical personnel visiting the unit, he was told that they were working through their backlog of requests dating back to January. Another man we spoke with in C1 said that he filed requests to see medical staff and has yet to receive a response; a third in B1 said that he waited three days to receive a required asthma inhaler.

When asked if they had sought out a social worker or chaplain, two men in B1, stated they had not asked to see a social worker or chaplain because they were told it was "useless" and there was a 14 day wait. Two men from C1 said that the box on their pod where you could submit a request to see a social worker was full. The two men



from a different pod in C1 reported that the request box on their pod hadn't been emptied in three weeks.

In C1, two men stated that the social workers assigned to their unit have been on maternity leave for months. A new social worker was assigned weeks earlier but had not conducted any appointments yet.

Two of the men in C1 reported that a chaplain had been to visit their housing pod, but very sporadically. They said that the Imam had come once in the past five months. The men were under the impression that the Imam had tried to come more times but that he had been denied entry. We did not ask them to elaborate on how they came to this impression.

Limited Access to Toilet Paper, Cleaning Supplies, and Showers.

Unprompted, men in B1 and C1 both spoke about a lack of toilet paper. In B1, a man reported having to tear up pieces of a sheet to use as toilet paper. In C1, two men explained that each pair of cellmates is issued one roll per week. They stated that the roll typically runs out by the end of the week and, as a result, a black market has developed with incarcerated people buying toilet paper from one another.

Men in B1 and C1 reported that they are not provided with access to cleaning supplies for their cells. Two men in C1 reported receiving cleaning supplies three times in the past year. Two other men in C1 mentioned female correctional officers going "above and beyond" to purchase and provide cleaning supplies themselves at the officers' personal expense.

Laundry was another cause of concern for the men we met. In C1, two men stated that they had not received clean sheets for two months and that access to clean masks was inconsistent.

All ten men we spoke with reported issues with mold in the showers. Two men in C1 stated that there had been black mold in the showers for months which was fixed only after repeated complaints. One man we spoke with in B1 reported that men stand on a chair in the shower to avoid mold. Another man in B1 said that the men use sandwich bags to protect their feet as they are not given shower shoes as required in Section IV page 27 of the inmate handbook. Two men we spoke with in B1 said that bleach was readily available to clean the showers, but no sponges or other cleaning implements were provided. They said that they use their clothing as cleaning rags. In C4, we directly observed that the vents in the showers were clogged.



Our escorts told us that the prison staff were in the process of replacing moldy or damaged shower panels facility-wide.

Eight of the ten men that we spoke with reported they could not take showers regularly due to the limited number of stalls and limited out of cell time. One man we spoke with in B1 said that he had been in CFCF for over a week and had only been able to shower once. Two of the men we spoke with in C1 reported no access to haircuts.

Two men we spoke with in C1 expressed concern that lack of access to laundry, showers, and haircuts might have an impact on their legal proceedings. They were worried about the effect of appearing in court disheveled and unkempt, inconsistent with Section II, pages 10-11 of the inmate handbook.

Processing Area Crowding.

When we visited the processing area where men are brought when they first arrive at the prison, there were multiple empty cells and one cell holding six men. All six men were lying down with blankets over their heads, four men were sleeping on the benches and two on the floor. We asked the staff escorting us why all the men were crowded into one cell with so many cells unoccupied. Corrections staff informed us that men are kept grouped into cohorts based on when they arrive at the facility. The staff also informed us that men stay in that area for under 12 hours, and typically much less. One of the men we spoke with in C1 reported unprompted that he slept on the floor in the processing area for three days when he first arrived at CFCF. Another man in C1 stated that he had spent four days in the processing area.

People in Custody Concerned About Staffing Levels and Staff Performance.

The men we interviewed expressed a mix of sympathy and frustration with prison staff. One man stated, "Staff are overwhelmed and overworked and as a result, we become cattle to them." Another man commented, "They use understaffing as an excuse for everything."

Another man in B1 shared that a developmentally disabled man in his unit had defecated inside his jumpsuit and he had to advocate on the man's behalf for the staff to issue him a new jumpsuit. He said that the correctional officer referred him to the incarcerated block worker who "has to do everything and is overworked."

One man in B1 commented "There is no structure. One guard said, 'I do what I want to do!'" This sentiment was shared by one of the men we spoke with in C1 who, in



reporting frequent fist fights in his unit over phone access, said, "Officers don't want to help, they're disrespectful. 'You're not tough? You can't take a phone?'"

Another man in C1 said "This place is like a powder keg- there's a lack of structure- no rules, no consistency."

II. Recommendations to consider

Staffing levels at the prison appear to be the source of many of the issues observed and discussed in interviews. In the Department's response to our May 26th letter, the Department explained that it is engaged in aggressive recruitment efforts and is continually hiring new classes of correctional officers.

Hiring and training new staff is a key component to addressing the issues identified.

But hiring is a long-term process and conditions inside the facility need to improve immediately. Bringing on new staff is a necessary but not sufficient condition for solving the humanitarian crisis in Philadelphia's prison system.

Recognizing the process of hiring new staff will be protracted, we recommend a review of needs currently unmet in the Philadelphia prisons and re-prioritizing current staff duties. The City should also consider hiring temporary staff, in line with the state [Department of Corrections actions](#) at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the Prison Society's observations, discussions with staff, and interviews of people in custody, we provide the following additional suggestions for Philadelphia to consider.

LOCKED IN CELLS FOR EXTENDED PERIODS WITHOUT STAFF SUPERVISION.

- Staff distribution should be prioritized so that calls for help or rings from an in-cell buzzer are always responded to.
- Procedures should be put in place to create consistency in how many people are being let out of their cells and which people are let out when. The Department of Prisons can address the current inconsistency, which leads some people to go days without being let out, while it continues to hire more officers and works to comply with the three hours of daily out of cell time for



non-quarantined units required by Remick v. City of Philadelphia 2:20-cv-01959-BMS.

NO IN-PERSON FAMILY VISITS. LIMITED ACCESS TO PHONE AND VIDEO CALLS.

- Philadelphia should join the more than 19 Pennsylvania counties allowing in-person, non-contact family visits. This May, we shared a [set of recommendations](#) for resuming visiting at county prisons. These recommendations, based on current CDC guidance, public health experts, and best practices from across the country, include:
 - Conducting verbal screenings and temperature checks of all visitors at point of entry;
 - Requiring visitors and incarcerated persons wear face masks throughout the visit; and
 - Starting with non-contact and, where possible, outdoor visits that include social distancing.
 - Prioritizing vaccinated people in custody and vaccinated family.

Many of the counties that have prioritized in person family visits have done so cautiously and with the protective measures listed, even while vaccination rates among the incarcerated population remains lower than the overall county.

- 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.
- Repair broken phones. Purchase a supply of backup tablets consistent with the rate of damage to ensure rapid replacement and continuity of services.
- Improve video visiting quality. The City Council, Mayor's Office, and the Managing Director's Office would never put-up with the video quality experienced by Philadelphians in custody and their families. Unlike members of city government, Philadelphians in custody have no other means to see their loved ones.
- Audit current procedures for sending and delivering mail to housing units in order to identify and remedy delays. Institute daily mail pick-up.

LITTLE ACCESS TO PROGRAMMING, BOOKS, IN-CELL ACTIVITIES.

We are pleased to collaborate with the Philadelphia Department of Prisons to distribute 2,200 Prison Society-purchased puzzle books to people incarcerated in CFCF. These books were provided to the Prisons on July 2nd. We have yet to receive



confirmation that they have been delivered. While these activity books, if delivered to people in custody, will help with mental engagement temporarily, there needs to be a more sustained approach to the lack of activities.

- 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 have use 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
 - Resumption of library and law library access.
- Establish and share a clear timeline for full resumption of programming from external volunteers and program providers.

DELAYS IN ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE AND COUNSELING.

- Identify what is causing the current wait times for medical care and then work with the prison's healthcare team to shorten wait-times.
- Work with the prison's healthcare team to develop a plan to triage all outstanding medical requests.
- Likewise, identify and address hurdles to getting requests for counselling and chaplaincy services processed and responded to in a reasonable timeframe.

LIMITED ACCESS TO TOILET PAPER, CLEANING SUPPLIES, AND SHOWERS.

- Immediately increase access to cleaning supplies.
- Ensure that linens and other laundry are being washed on a weekly basis as required by the inmate handbook, Section II, page 13.
- Provide an adequate supply of toilet paper to all men at CFCF.
- Provide shower shoes to all men at CFCF as required by the inmate handbook, Section IV, page 27.
- Publicly issue a timetable for fixing all showers in need of repair.



- Institute a quarterly maintenance inspection and repair schedule for all showers in the prison.

OBSERVATIONS REGARDING PROCESSING AREA.

- If space permits, assign only one or two men to each holding cell. This would allow everyone access to a bench to lie on, and help stop viral spread.
- Ensure that all people are processed and released from admissions holding cells within 24 hours as required by *Bowers v. City of Philadelphia*, 2:06-cv-03229-RBS.

It is the Prisons Society's intention that this memorandum will be of assistance to the policy makers of Philadelphia. We are a partner in working towards a more just and humane prison system. We believe that the walkthrough conducted on June 3rd was of mutual benefit to the prison's administration and residents.

We request to conduct a similar walkthrough of each correctional facility on State Road, starting with a walkthrough of the Detention Center, followed by Riverside Correctional Facility, Philadelphia Industrial Correctional Center, ASDCU and Mod-3.

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





CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
DEPARTMENT OF PRISONS
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
7901 State Road

Philadelphia, PA 19136

(215) 685-8201

FAX (215) 685-8577

E-Mail: blanche.carney@prisons.phila.gov

Website: www.phila.gov/departments/prisons

Blanche Carney, MSS, CCM
Commissioner

July 21, 2021

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

Dear Ms. Shubik-Richards,

Thank you for your letter of July 13, 2021, by which you raise concerns arising out of your tour of the Curran Fromhold Correctional Facility (CFCF) on June 3, 2021, and the complaints your organization received in April and May of this year. The concerns you highlight are: (1) limited out of cell time and staff supervision, (2) no in-person visits and limited access to calls, (3) little access to programming, books, and in-cell activities, (4) delays in medical care and counseling, (5) limited access to toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and showers, (6) process area crowding, and (7) incarcerated persons' concern about staff levels and performance. You then provide a series of recommendations to address these identified concerns.

I am pleased to share that PDP has already undertaken substantial efforts to mitigate the concerns you highlight and that the situation within the facilities, as a result of these efforts, is markedly changed from the April-May time period addressed in your correspondence. While you reference the volume of complaints in those months as heightening concern, I expect that – in parallel with the changed conditions – the complaint volume has reduced substantially in the six weeks following your visit, much as the number of grievances filed by the PDP population has dropped substantially.

As described in your letter, individuals reported to you that they received between one and four and a half hours of daily out of cell time in April and May. Despite making its best efforts during that time period, PDP was not unaware of these concerns, and, at the time of your visit, already working to ameliorate them. Since your visit in early June, PDP has been able to provide at least three hours of out of cell time across the PDP campus. This substantial and sustained increase in the amount of time out of cell has relieved stress on both the incarcerated population and staff. PDP accomplished this by increasing cohort sizes (a decision informed by the sustained low Covid-19 infection rate in the facilities), by incentivizing sufficient levels of vaccination so that "all-vaccinated" units could be created, and by strategically deploying its

newest staff members, the class of 23 correctional officers who completed their training in early May.¹

Before providing more detail on staffing, I must first note the positive impact that the increased operation of the Philadelphia Court System has on the morale and size of the incarcerated population. As you are no doubt aware, there were individuals incarcerated at PDP who had been held for over two hundred days without even a preliminary hearing. The sense of being stuck indefinitely without process was an underlying stressor throughout the population. I am grateful to our partners in the criminal justice system that they have chosen to focus on custody cases in the early stage of the Court's reopening, the impact of which is substantial. Several weeks ago the PDP census hovered around 4,800 individuals – on Friday, July 16, it was down to 4,658. I remain hopeful this trend continues, as increased court process and a reduced population substantially help to ease the tensions you identify.

On staffing, as you may be aware, PDP, supported by the City's Office of Human Resources, has accelerated its efforts to recruit and hire new staff and to bring back as a temporary staffing measure, PDP retirees. PDP now has a class of 15 correctional officers in the Training Academy, and PDP is nearing completion of background review on another class of between 20 and 30 cadets, as a result of continuing its background review on 126 individuals who attended an orientation in June. To accelerate onboarding, PDP has committed to running the Training Academy on an ongoing basis – as soon as a sufficient number of individuals are cleared for employment, an Academy class can commence. Once a review of the current individuals has been completed, PDP has pre-clearance to orient and onboard interested persons from an additional list of over 400 individuals. While these efforts to identify, hire, and train new correctional officers continue, PDP is also planning to hire interested retirees as part-time staff. Letters have gone out to the approximately 105 correctional officer retirees whose pension status would not be impacted by returning as a part-time employee, and PDP expects that interested persons would be able to start working by the middle of August.

These individuals will augment the current staffing compliment and help facilitate the reopening of the PDP facilities. But even with our reporting staffing challenges, I want to be clear that all units have been staffed at the appropriate levels required to safely operate the facilities. Your statement that you observed unstaffed housing units perhaps reflects a misunderstanding of the appropriate staffing requirements of the facilities. Had any such inappropriate staffing been observed by senior security and operations staff who accompanied you, it would have been immediately corrected.

¹ One of your recommendations, that of creating consistency in providing out of cell time, presumably refers to having set hours that incarcerated persons can expect to be out of cell. Unfortunately, that is likely not an operable proposal because emergent matters can curtail the operation of recreation. For example, if one cohort has an incident at the end of recreation time, the other cohort will not get recreation as the entire block will be kept in cell while the incident is investigated. If there is not variety in the provision of out of cell time, the later cohort is more likely to have their recreation interrupted, an unfair burden for that cohort to bear.

As I mentioned, we have already seen an impact from the 23 new correctional officers who began in May, who have been a major part of our improvements since the beginning of June. Given your summary of complaints of poor attitude from staff, I would appreciate specific names of inmates, and, if possible, staff members, in order to investigate and, as need, correct these behaviors.

I will next address the other issues raised in your letter: contact with family, medical care, admission processing time, and provision of services and supplies.

As you likely know, we expanded the video visits to permit an hour of free family visitation weekly and provide fifteen (15) free minutes of daily phone time to every incarcerated person. So every incarcerated person has access to increased, and free means of communication. Well over 300,000 video visits have been made by our population since PDP established the video visitation system in December 2020. Any glitches that there have been in video or audio quality have been quickly resolved. As for the mail, mail received by postal delivery is processed timely and issued to the inmate population. Lastly, we will be following a strategic, phased approach in returning to in-person civilian visits, to best protect the health of our staff and inmates. We must continue to exercise the same caution which has provided a far lower infection rate at the PDP than most other correctional facilities locally and nationwide and especially as we monitor the Delta Variant.

Cohorting principles also affect the intake process, which can result in what you describe as "processing area crowding." As you know, one facet of the PDP intake process, which has been redesigned to reduce the risk of the introduction of Covid-19, is that groups of new admissions are cohorted together. We have been in compliance with our obligation to house new admissions within 24 hours so that the cohorted group is rehoused into intake quarantine cells within that time period. For Covid management purposes, however, we will continue to house people as described in that initial 24-hour period. Consistent with both cohorting and the timely processing of people out of the receiving area, on your tour, you observed that a limited number of cohorted people were awaiting housing while in that processing area.

PDP, through its contracted medical providers, has continuously provided necessary medical care to the incarcerated population. Regarding the medical backlog mentioned, PDP tracks this on a routine basis and was already taking steps to reduce this backlog. I am pleased to share that, since the date of your visit, we have made substantial headway reducing the backlog of scheduled medical appointments. To accomplish this, I specially assigned staff to escort inmates to medical to reduce any backlog and ensure that inmates are timely seen. As a result of this effort, the backlog has been reduced approximately 50% and the delay reduced even more.

I am concerned at your mention that individuals are not able to have their religious and social services needs met, particularly because religious and social services are being timely provided. As I always request, please provide the names of those inmates who have complained of lack of services so that it may be investigated and swiftly addressed.

You next summarize complaints of lack of toilet paper, access to cleaning supplies, and not being able to clean laundry and masks. None of our records bear this out. PDP has ample supplies of toilet paper and cleaning supplies in its inventory, and these are routinely distributed across the campus. The incarcerated population thus has access to toilet paper and cleaning supplies, consistent use of laundry, and, while each having up to four (4) washable masks at a time, inmates may exchange their masks weekly. Regarding the showers, as you learned on your tour any moldy or damaged shower panels are being replaced department-wide as a function of routine maintenance. I hope that your observance of haircuts occurring on your tour eases your expressed concern about access to barber services, which are, as you saw, ongoing.

I am glad you acknowledge our collaboration in providing over 2,200 puzzle books to our population. Further, we already had been providing a large crossword puzzle book in the commissary bag we have been providing to inmates who have been or become fully vaccinated.

In closing, I hope the above addresses the issues raised by way of your letter, and thank you for sharing your ideas as we all work through these truly unprecedented times.

Sincerely,



Blanche Carney, MSS, CCM
Commissioner

cc: Tumar Alexander, Managing Director
Vanessa Garrett-Harley, First Deputy Managing Director
James Engler, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Members of City Council
Diana Cortes, City Solicitor
Alan Tauber, Interim Defender
Larry Krasner, District Attorney
Rebecca Rynhart, Controller
Alexander DeSantis, Inspector General
Philadelphia Members of the Pennsylvania Legislature
Illana Eisenstein and Joe Baker, DLA Piper



Blanche Carney
Commissioner
Department of Prisons
City of Philadelphia

Via email

August 19, 2021

Dear Commissioner Carney:

Thank you for your July 21st response to our memo.

Since we sent our memo, two more people have died in Philadelphia Department of Prisons custody, complaints about the facilities continue to increase, and already insufficient staffing levels have dropped by another 101 staff since we first requested a walkthrough in April.

In July, calls and letters to the Prison Society expressing concerns about the State Road facilities were up 30%. The concerns we are now hearing reinforce that conditions remain as dangerous and degrading as what we observed in June, and indicate that they may have deteriorated further. We continue to receive complaints about lack of out of cell time, access to phones, access to showers, cleaning supplies, mail service, and delays and denials of medical care.

In July, we received 14 complaints from people reporting they had gone up to ten days without being able to shower, and four reports of people being held in their cells for more than three days in a row. Five people complained about being placed in restrictive housing without a mechanism to appeal. In addition, three people have informed us that grievance forms are not available, which may account for the decline in grievance filings which you mention in your letter.

In the first two weeks of August, we have received complaints that padlocks, which cannot be opened by the control bubble, are being installed on the outside of cells in the Riverside Correctional Facility (RCF). If this is true, this likely presents a fire

hazard. We are also being informed that the facility has been locked down for the last week and a half.

The conditions we directly observed, the interviews we conducted with multiple people who had no way to coordinate their statements, and the hundreds of calls and letters we have received since May, are contrary to many of the assertions in your response letter. This disconnection, and the increasing stream of deaths and alarming reports, leads to the conclusion that the City is not treating the challenges facing the Department of Prisons like the serious human rights crisis it is.

We accordingly request to conduct a similar walkthrough and series of interviews of the Riverside facility the week of August 30th.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "CSR", is positioned above the typed name.

Claire Shubik-Richards
Executive Director

Copy to
Greg Vrato, Philadelphia Department of Prisons, Chief of Staff
Tumar Alexander, Managing Director
Vanessa Garrett Harley, First Deputy Managing Director
Jim Engler, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Members of City Council
Diana Cortes, City Solicitor
Alan Tauber, Interim Defender
Larry Krasner, District Attorney
Rebecca Rynhart, Controller
Alexander DeSantis, Inspector General
Philadelphia members of the Pennsylvania Legislature
Ilana Eisenstein and Joe Baker, DLA Piper