

CIC Bulletin March 2019

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CIC BULLETIN

NEWS FROM DC CORRECTIONS INFORMATION COUNCIL

Message from CIC Executive Director



Donald Isaac, Sr

The past month has been full of meetings, reports, and interactions with our federal, district, and community partners. I heard a presentation from the leadership of CORE, and held meetings with the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, Rethink Reentry, and other individuals and organizations from the advocacy community. A high point of the past month was my participation in an inspection of the CTF and CDF in response to the concern regarding lack of outdoor recreation. This experience marked my entry into this aspect of CIC operations, and I was pleased with both the cooperation of the DOC and the

professionalism and competence of the CIC team.

Within the past thirty days, I have prepared testimony for the Judiciary Committee of the Council of District of Columbia for a Performance Hearing for the agency, and for support of Bill 23-0127, the “Second Look Amendment Act of 2019.” Also, the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Returning Citizens Affairs (MORCA) hosted a meeting with the CIC and the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). This meeting was held at the MLK office of MORCA and was an important initial step toward greater coordination between these offices. We were also pleased to witness the opening of the DOC Reentry Center, and to start in the development of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DOC.

Last month, we were glad to welcome Kareem McCraney as the newest addition to our team, and this month we are saying goodbye to our most tenured staff member, Laura de las Casas. Laura has certainly distinguished herself as a capable, competent member of the reentry community, and her absence will be felt on many levels. We wish her the best in her new endeavors.

In the coming months we are looking forward to a new office, new staff, and new aspects of our operations. I want to thank all of the individuals, organizations, community advocates, and government entities for their acceptance of me in my new role, and for the willingness that each of you has shown to work together for the betterment of the men, women, youth, and families impacted by incarceration in America.

The President of the United States has designated April 2019 as “Second Chance Month.” I close with words from his letter:

“For the millions of American citizens with criminal records, the keys to successful re-entry are becoming employable and securing employment. Beyond the income earned from a steady paycheck, gainful employment teaches responsibility and commitment and affirms human dignity. As a Nation, we are stronger when more individuals have stable jobs that allow them to provide for both themselves and their loved ones.”

As the Executive Director of the CIC I go on record as stating that we are committed to seeing this goal manifested in our policies, programs, and operations both in and outside of the institutions.

Recent Inspections: DOC

The CIC visited the Correctional Treatment Facility (CTF) and the Central Detention

Facility (CDF) on February 25 and 26, 2019 respectively, in order to inquire about the frequency of outdoor recreation for inmates. The CIC had previously received reports that units were being denied access to outdoor recreation. We spoke with the Warden, Executive Staff, and inmates, who were all forthcoming with their perspectives on the matter. The CIC will soon post a short thematic report detailing the issues and findings, as well as any response received from the DC Department of Corrections (DOC).



BOP Replies to Violent Conditions at USP Hazelton

On March 21, 2018 the Bureau of Prisons sent the CIC a formal response to our letter of October 22, 2018 regarding violent conditions at USP Hazelton. The CIC's visit was prompted by the violent deaths of two DC residents incarcerated at USP Hazelton in April 2018 and September 2018. The Bureau of Prisons response is now included at the end of the CIC's open letter, which will be available on our website.

High Arsenic Levels in Water at USP Atlanta

The CIC has received several concerns in the past few months from individuals housed at USP Atlanta regarding contaminated water at the facility. The CIC reached out to the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) regarding these concerns, and was informed that unsafe levels of arsenic were detected in the water at USP Atlanta but have been resolved. Forty-nine DC individuals are currently held at USP Atlanta.

According to the BOP, arsenic was detected by water sampling conducted by a third-party consultant in November 2018. (Several local news outlets reported that water tests detected arsenic as early as September 2018.) Per the BOP, further testing was completed in December but test results were not received by the Bureau until January 29, 2019, due to the government shutdown. All water samples tested positive for arsenic, at 17 parts per billion (ppb) or less. The maximum contaminant level for arsenic in drinking water is 10 ppb per EPA guidelines.

Inmates reported that on February 1, 2019 they were instructed by the Warden not to drink the tap water, but not told why. On February 6, 2019 they were told that the water contained elevated levels of arsenic, and the facility began providing each inmate five sixteen-ounce bottles of water per day for drinking. Per the BOP, the facility purchased water to use in cooking meals, and staff conducted town hall meetings on all housing units to notify inmates not to drink or cook with tap water.

Facility documentation provided by inmates at USP Atlanta states that water tests conducted on February 8, 2019 by a third-party consultant detected no arsenic in the water supply. The BOP informed the CIC that testing was conducted on two more occasions during March 2019, including by a third-party consultant. All tests were below the detection level for arsenic. USP Atlanta has returned to using the facility water supply at this time, and the facility water will be tested quarterly going forward.

DC residents incarcerated at USP Atlanta have expressed concern that the facility did not notify them of the possible contamination when it was first suspected, and have said that they do not trust that the water is safe to drink or that food prepared with facility water is safe to eat. Inmates report that facility staff continues to drink bottled water. One DC resident reported that facility medical staff diagnosed him with serious medical issues as a result of exposure to elevated levels of arsenic. Inmates informed the CIC that facility medical staff was refusing to test inmates for elevated levels of arsenic, and the BOP confirmed that there are currently no plans to conduct such testing.

DC Auditor Reports Poor Conditions at DC Jail

On February 28, 2019, the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) released a report entitled, "Poor Conditions Persist at Aging D.C. Jail; New Facility Needed to Mitigate Risks." The report provides a detailed assessment of various conditions at the Central Detention Facility (CDF) and the Correctional Treatment Facility (CTF) from fiscal years 2014 through 2018, as well as a historical glimpse into the legal history of court oversight at the CDF. It also cites Department of Health (DOH) findings of violations related to environmental conditions, public health, and food service. ODCA makes recommendations to both the DC Department of

... services. CDCR makes recommendations to both the DC Department of Corrections (DOC) and the District of Columbia, including compliance monitoring of acceptable health standards and support for a new D.C. Jail facility.

(See Link to Report)

https://www.scribd.com/document/400769643/D-C-jail-Report-2-28-19#from_embed

CIC Supports Resentencing Hearing Bill 23-0127: The Second Look Amendment Act

On March 26, 2019, the CIC provided testimony in support of Bill 23-0127, the “Second Look Amendment Act of 2019.” The newly proposed legislation allows an inmate who both committed a crime while under the age of 25 years and has served at least 15 years of incarceration – the ability to petition the court for a sentencing reduction hearing. CIC Executive Director Donald L. Isaac, Sr. presented to the District of Columbia’s Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. He addressed how cognitive science supports why the eligibility age of hearing candidates was increased from below 18 years old under the Incarcerated Reduction Amendment Act of 2016 to below 25 years old under the Second Look Amendment Act of 2019. The CIC strongly recommends that all candidates awaiting a sentencing reduction hearing are housed at the Department of Corrections’ Correctional Treatment Facility, while receiving opportunities for continued programming. The CIC also strongly recommends in-depth life skills orientations and trainings, which teach candidates the fundamental skills required to thrive in society as a mature adult.

(See Link for Testimony)

https://gallery.mailchimp.com/bdc24a13dbc7ad8bb87aa8081/files/8fe5a8ff-9466-4742-82c7-d05055bcdf3d/CIC_Testimony_on_Letterhead_2_.01.docx

The Open Meeting is rescheduled for Thursday, April 18, 2019 at 6pm. Room 1114



Future CIC Open Meeting Dates

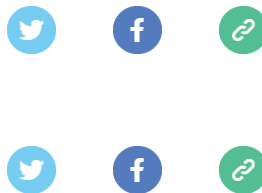
Thursday, April 11, 2019

One Judiciary Square, 441 4th St NW
6pm - 7:30 pm



CIC is Moving! Tentatively Scheduled for May of 2019

The new office will be located at 1400 I St NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005.



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DC Corrections Information Council (CIC)
441 4th St NW, Suite 270N
Washington, DC 20001

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