



Human Rights Defense Center

DEDICATED TO PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

August 28, 2013

SENT VIA FAX ONLY

Senator Patrick Leahy
437 Russell Senate Bldg
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Transfer of Female Prisoners from Danbury, CT Facility

Dear Senator Leahy:

As the associate director of the Human Rights Defense Center, a non-profit organization that is dedicated to protecting the rights of people held in U.S. detention facilities, I am contacting you to express our concerns regarding plans by the Bureau of Prisons to transfer all female prisoners from the BOP facility in Danbury, CT to a newly-opened prison in Aliceville, AL.

HRDC believes that rehabilitation should be a primary factor and controlling consideration in our nation's criminal justice system, because around 95% of prisoners will one day be released and return to our communities. Numerous studies have found that prisoners who maintain close ties and communication with their families have an increased chance of staying out of prison following their release.

For example, according to a 2004 study by the Washington, D.C.-based Urban Institute, "Our analysis found that [released prisoners] with closer family relationships, stronger family support, and fewer negative dynamics in relationships with intimate partners were more likely to have worked after release and were less likely to have used drugs." The study authors noted that "It is evident that family support, when it exists, is a strong asset that can be brought to the table in the reentry planning process."

Additionally, according to a 2005 Re-Entry Policy Council Report, prison-based practices and programs that "facilitate and strengthen family connections during incarceration" can "reduce the strain of parental separation, reduce recidivism rates, and increase the likelihood of successful re-entry" after prisoners are released.

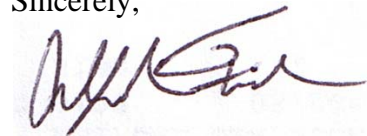
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If the BOP transfers all female prisoners from Danbury to a remote location in Alabama, those prisoners will have decreased opportunities for visits from their families and children, which will negatively impact their opportunities for rehabilitation. According to the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, an estimated 7,400 female BOP prisoners have minor children, based on 2007 data ("Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children," BJS, August 8, 2008).

Indeed, should Danbury be converted to a facility for male prisoners, there will be no longer be a dedicated facility for female BOP prisoners in the Northeast Region – although there are dozens of BOP prisons nationwide for male prisoners, spanning all BOP regions.

Therefore, we oppose efforts by the BOP to transfer all female prisoners from Danbury to the Aliceville facility. Thank you for your time and attention in this regard;

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Friedmann", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Alex Friedmann
Associate Director, HRDC

cc: Senator Grassley, Ranking Member
Senate Judiciary Committee members
Senator Richard Blumenthal
Senator Chris Murphy