

GRATER FRIENDS

JULY AND AUGUST
2022

WE ARE HUMANS

Jeffrey Baker of SCI Huntingdon

To all the readers out there. I wanted to remind you all that we inmates are not animals. Some would say “yeah we know” as does most of society. All too often people who are in prison in TV shows or news broadcasts are depicted as horrible animal-like creatures that don’t deserve to breathe free air. I was once one of them. Like so many out there, I truly believed that people in prison were the worst humanity had to offer. I believed that only truly horrible people went to prison in this “FREE” country of ours.

Since my fall from grace, I have learned a very important lesson; those of us in jail are just people. People who are your neighbors, friends, loved ones. Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. I have met people that have committed what society deems as the worst crimes in the world. What I have learned, most of those people have only ever committed one crime, and for that: life without parole. Other options are like mine: extremely long, mandatory sentences. What society fails to consider is that our great country has been plagued by over-incarceration. TV and news broadcasts depict us as nothing more than animals, so violent we can not ever be freed. What they fail to mention is, if we do get released, they would pass us on the streets or shake our hands and never know we were once inmates. Why?

Simple: we are not animals. Yes, it is true some of us deserve our punishments, to pay our “debt to society,” but that does not make us animals. Every year during the holiday seasons there are endless commercials seeking donations for animal shelters for neglected animals. What are we in here? We are neglected, sometimes abused, often in solitary confinement for simply reacting to a staff member in a manner consistent with the way we are being treated at the time. We are human beings and are treated as badly as any animal in those ads. Like here at this prison, we are in cells far too small for 2 fully grown adult males. Our activities are so limited that we can lift weights, play handball, or play basketball.

Other prisons have pick-up style ball games year round. They have horseshoes and volleyball year round in their yards. They treat us like animals and get shocked when someone acts like one. It is our job to show our oppressors that we are not the animals society deems us to be, and it is society’s job to look around and see who we really are. Not what we’ve done. A mistake or a bad choice, just one, often results in us being here. Bad legal representation due to overworked public defenders or us not being able to afford a paid attorney are the biggest reason for the over-incarceration.

I believe it’s time for our commercials on TV, and I believe it is society’s responsibility to help make sure that all the men and women charged should get equal protection and representation under the law. In a country that houses well over a million people in prison, it is hard for me to believe that just about everyone knows someone in prison. People like me who can not afford a good attorney, we are the ones who suffer. Is it too much to ask to have a true shot at a truly fair trial. One where both sides are of equal work loads and staff. I implore all of you out there to do something meaningful for real prison reform!!!

Fight for the rights of anyone who is charged with a crime. Volunteer if you can. Donate to foundations that help fight against this abomination. Organizations like FAMM, The Prison Society, or the ACLU. Write letters to your senators. Remember, we are your neighbors, your friends, your families. We are not animals. Thank you to all who have read this and are trying to help.

*A Publication of the
Pennsylvania Prison Society*

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FROM THE SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of the Society,

July marks the midpoint of 2022 and the beginning of the Prison Society's fiscal year. I'm someone who has always been drawn to the idea of new beginnings— opportunities to pause, reflect, and set priorities for both the near and not-so-near future.

We've seen a lot of change in the last twelve months, some good, some not so good. Recovery from the pandemic remains slow, and the Prison Society is committed to working with you to improve the health, safety and dignity of people incarcerated in PA.

Our efforts to end the medical co-pay last legislative session came up short. There were multiple proposals circulating at the end of session, but none of the language ultimately made it in. The work and the campaign continues, though. Later in this issue, you'll find an article from FAMM outlining how you can help document issues related to accessing medical care and copays.

Our work to better understand the impact of the current visiting systems also continues. THANK YOU to the more than 100 of you who have already responded to

the survey included in the last issue about your access to visits. As you may remember, this survey is being conducted in partnership with Temple University, and will help us better understand your experiences and hopefully identify ways to improve the process.

If you have not already done so, please fill out the survey found again at the end of this issue. If you have already filled it out, share it with someone else on your block! We had several people send us handwritten copies of the survey because cellmates and friends also wanted to share their thoughts— we encourage this! The more people we hear back from, the better we can understand your experiences. I've personally read many of the responses that have come through so far and am grateful for your time and your honesty.

Thank you for being an integral partner in all that we do at the Prison Society.

With gratitude,
Kirstin



GRATERFRIENDS

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Graterfriends is a publication from the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

We reserve the right to edit submissions. Original submissions will not be returned. Allegations of misconduct must be documented and statistics should be supported by sources. All submissions should be no more than 500 words, or two double-spaced pages. Letters more than 200 words, or one double-spaced page, will not be published in their entirety and may be shortened for clarity and space.

To protect Graterfriends from copyright infringement, please attach a note, on your submission, stating that you are the original author of the work and that you give us permission to edit and print; date and sign the declaration.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY

The Prison Society has produced *Graterfriends* with your support since 2002, but do you know what else we do and how we may be able to help?

WHO ARE WE?

Founded in 1787, The Pennsylvania Prison Society is the nation's oldest human rights organization. Our mission for 235 years has been to promote the health, safety, and dignity of people impacted by mass incarceration. In 1828, the Prison Society was granted access to app people in state or county custody in PA – we remain the only non-governmental organization in the United States with our level of statutory access to people in prison. Although some of our specific programs have evolved over time, we remain committed to responding to the needs of incarcerated people and their loved ones. Today, we use that access to monitor prison conditions, assist people in prison with individual issues they raise, support people in prison maintaining and building connection to family and community, and educate the public about the largely hidden world of prisons.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY?

You may write to us at 230 South Broad Street, Suite 605 Philadelphia, PA 19102. You can also have your loved ones call our family support helpline at anytime: 215-564-4775. Our team can assist to answer questions about specific facilities, policies, general issues, and concerns. Our team is small and we are not able to provide legal assistance, but we will do our best to help you get the information and resources you need. Unfortunately, at this time as an organization we are generally not able to use ConnectNetwork to correspond with people confined in SCIs.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WRITE TO YOU?

We will always do our best to assist you. You can write to us to request resources, report conditions at a state or local facility, or request a prison monitor. The Prison Society is not a legal organization and can not provide specific legal advice or representation. However, our correspondence volunteers thoroughly respond to each and every letter we receive with information about other resources and organizations. We can also help you navigate different issues related to education, free books and other creative programs, reentry services, mental health resources, pen pal programs, and more.

WHAT IS PRISON MONITORING?

The Prison Society is the only non-governmental organization in the country with a legal right to meet privately with any person incarcerated in their state. Each

month, we receive hundreds of reports concerning access to healthcare, abuse, property, conditions of confinement, treatment, and other issues. Our trained volunteer Prison Monitors can meet with anyone incarcerated in Pennsylvania state or county prison to hear their concern in detail and engage in follow-up advocacy.

Out of respect for one's privacy and safety, we will never send a Prison Monitor without an explicit request for a visit from an incarcerated person or their loved one. During a visit, a prison monitor will meet with the person in custody one-on-one to discuss and document their situation. Following the visit, volunteers are empowered to speak with prison administration on their behalf to try to improve the situation. It is important to note that we are not lawyers and cannot assist with legal issues or casework.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SHARE WHAT'S GOING ON IN PRISON?

We are grateful to the countless people in custody and their families who help promote prison transparency across the Commonwealth. Beyond documenting working to address concerns on an individual and/or facility level, the information you provide drives our vital conversations with Pennsylvania legislators, allied organizations, and the public. As we work to educate others and engage in systemic advocacy, it is vital that this is led by the experiences and opinions of the people closest to the problem- you! Your voices directly informed our current advocacy to end the \$5 medical copay for incarcerated people, as well as our work to remove barriers to family visits.

WHAT ABOUT REENTRY SERVICES?

For individuals returning to the Philadelphia area, The Prison Society does have a mentoring program available designed to help ease the transition from incarceration back to communities by providing a strong social support network. We hope to expand this to other regions in the state in the future.

HOW DOES *GRATERFRIENDS* FIT INTO THE PRISON SOCIETY'S MISSION?

Launched in 1981 by Joan Gauker and adopted by The Prison Society in 2002, *Graterfriends* is a critical outlet for incarcerated people to share their opinions and experiences. We are proud to have built a powerful community with you over these past two decades and encourage you to continue submitting to *Graterfriends*.

FAMM'S CALL TO ACTION

ON MEDICAL COPAYS

FAMM and the Pennsylvania Prison Society are advocating for an end to the \$5 medical copays in Pennsylvania state prisons. CADBI, the Institutional Law Project (ILP), and Physicians for Criminal Justice Reform have joined us. Now, you can help! We need to show the Dept. of Corrections (DOC) that the copays truly are a hardship for incarcerated people and their families. To do that, you can start using the grievance process when you are unable to afford a copay. The DOC tracks grievances, so seeing grievances over copays will help them understand how often people in prison can't pay. There are 4 steps you can take to file a grievance when you cannot afford a copay:

STEP 1: Know what medical services you should and should not be charged for under the current Prison Medical Services policy. Read ILP's article on this in the May/June 2022 edition of *Graterfriends*; 37 Pa. § Code 93.12, DOC Policy No. DC-ADM 820.

STEP 2: Review your medical services charges regularly on an ongoing basis.

STEP 3: If you are wrongly charged, file a grievance. Per ILP, your grievance should identify the date on which you received care, note that the care or medication you received does not qualify for the copay, and ask for a refund to your account.

STEP 4: If you are correctly charged under the current policies but cannot afford the copay, or the copay is a financial hardship to you or your loved ones, consider filing a grievance. Your grievance should identify the date on which you received care, note that the copay was correctly charged under existing policies but that you cannot afford it and/or it is a hardship to you and your loved ones, and explain why. Ask for a refund to your account. Take Step 4 only if you decide it is safe for you to do so. Please do not file grievances over copays that you can afford to pay. We want DOC to see how often people cannot afford the copay; we do not want to overwhelm the DOC with grievances from everyone getting health care.

STEP 5: Read FAMM's primer on Legislative Advocacy from Prison on our website or in the November/December 2021 issue of *Graterfriends*. Encourage your family to get involved by contacting FAMM and the Prison Society.

FAMM'S LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

JULY 2022

Lawmakers are in Harrisburg for 15 days in June to pass a finalized budget. Then, they break until September. There are limited session days the rest of the year due to the November elections. The House and Senate will be in session 3-6 days in September and October, and 1-3 days in November when this legislative session ends. Remember, it is a long road for a bill to become law: it must be approved by committees, the House, the Senate, and signed by the Governor. Note that many bills have multiple co-sponsors; only the prime or first-listed sponsor is included here.

Mandatory minimum sentences – HB 1587 (Rep. Brown), HB 1590 (Rep. Stephens), SB 1295 (Sen. Mastriano)

HB 1587 would create two-, five-, or 10-year mandatory minimum sentences for people who possess guns and have a felony record, depending on prior convictions. HB 1590 would require courts to impose the lesser of 5 years or the minimum sentence under the sentencing guidelines if the person is convicted of a crime of violence, armed drug offense, or felon-in-gun-possession.

HB 1587 and HB 1590 are out of the House Rules Committee and actively on the House Voting Calendar. They could advance at any time during session.

SB 1295 would create a new first-degree felony charge of fentanyl delivery resulting in death, punishable by a mandatory minimum of 25 years. The bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. FAMM opposes

these bills and has asked Governor Wolf to veto any bill containing mandatory minimums.

Life Without Parole Reform – SB 135 (Sen. Street) and HB 135 (Rep. Dawkins)

SB 135 would, if passed, provide parole eligibility after 20, 25, 30, or 35 years in prison to adults and juveniles convicted of first- and second-degree murder, depending on age and victim status. HB 135 would, if passed, make people serving life sentences (except those convicted of murder of a law enforcement officer) eligible for parole by deleting the words “without parole” from existing laws. Neither bill has received votes or review by committees since referral in Feb. and Oct. 2021.

Parole related bills -- SB 835/HB 2347 (Sen. Street and Rep. Kinsey), HB 518 (Rep. DeLuca), HB 2634 (Rep. Kail), HB 146 (Rep. Bernstine)

SB 835 would, if passed, create a parole mechanism for certain ill and/or aging prisoners to petition the Parole Board for release. The medical parole provision would apply to people who have a qualifying serious medical issue and a weakened ability to function in prison. The geriatric parole provision is separate, and would apply to people who are 55+, have served half their time (or 25 years, whichever is less), and the Parole Board agrees that there is no danger to the public. HB 2347 is an identical House companion bill to SB 835.

HB 2346 would, if passed, allow people to petition the sentencing court for release due to medical necessity (such as terminal illness, chronic and debilitating condition, serious functional or cognitive impairment) or extraordinary and compelling family hardship (such as the death or incapacitation of the caretaker of the person’s minor children). The bill has no exclusions or time served requirement; calling for a detailed case-by-case review of all relevant factors.

HB 518 would, if passed, require “repeat violent offenders” to do 85% of their time before being eligible for parole.

HB 146 would prohibit the Parole Board from paroling people convicted of a new violent offense while in prison (such as institutional assault) until 24 months after their minimum on their original sentence or the date of the new conviction, whichever is longer. It would delay parole 12 months for people convicted of obstruction of justice offenses while incarcerated. The bill is named “Markie’s Law” after an 8-year-old homicide victim. It was passed by the House in March and has been approved by the Senate Judiciary and Appropriations Committees. It is actively on the Senate floor. FAMM opposes the bill and has asked Governor Wolf to veto it as it is akin to a mandatory minimum.

None of these bills have received any votes or review by committees yet.

Earned time credits – HB 2030 (Rep. Mihalek)

HB 2030 would, if passed, create credits toward time off one’s minimum prison sentence upon completion of educational programs (for example, there would be a 90-day credit for getting a GED, 120-day credit for a diploma, 180-day credit for an advanced degree, etc.). The bill excludes certain types of crimes, including murder, rape, etc. It would also create a pilot program to study how many people in prison and on probation have learning disabilities and need additional supports. This bill has not received any votes or review by committee yet.

Clemency reform – SB 694 (Sen. Bartolotta) and HB 1719 (Rep. McClinton)

SB 694 would, if passed, begin the process of changing the state Constitution so that the governor can grant clemency whenever the Board of Pardons recommends a person for clemency by a vote of 4-1 (currently there is a unanimous requirement). HB 1719 would do the same but with a 3-2 vote, enabling more people to be considered for clemency. The bills have not received any votes or review by committees. FAMM issued a public letter to Governor Wolf and other officials calling for clemency expansion and improvement (see reprint in the March/April 2022 issue of this newsletter).

Prison Conditions –HB 1283 (Rep. Bullock), SB 686 (Sen. Muth), HB 1037 (Rep. T. Davis), HB 1753 (Rep. Brown), HB 1419 (Rep. Jones)

HB 1283 would, if passed, provide incarcerated parents with one free phone call or email per month to each of their children. SB 686, if passed, would ban the use of solitary confinement and provide alternative disciplinary measures, such as limiting visitation, recreation, or work. It would allow confinement to a person's own cell. HB 1037 would ban the use of solitary on pregnant women, LGBTQ+ people, and people who are 21 or less, or 70 plus, with a 15-day cap on solitary use.

HB 1753 would, if passed, end the \$5 medical copay in state prisons and prohibit the Dept. of Corrections from charging incarcerated people fees for medical services. Senator Bartolotta has also announced her intent to introduce a Senate bill eliminating prison copays, which should be introduced soon. These bills have not received committee votes yet. Note that FAMM and the Prison Society are working on multiple avenues to reduce or eliminate the copay, and issued a public letter in March asking Secretary Little to end the copays, which is available on our website (<https://famm.org/our-work/states-where-we-are-working/pennsylvania/>).

HB 1419 would, if passed, prohibit shackling and solitary confinement of pregnant women, require corrections officers interacting with pregnant women to have trauma-informed care training, prohibit full body searches of females by male guards, provide an appropriate amount of feminine hygiene products at no cost to women, and provide additional visitation between primary custodial parents and minor children. This bill was approved by the House Judiciary Committee and is actively on the House voting calendar, where it could be called at any time during session.

Other items of interest – HB 706 (Rep. McClinton), SB 104 (Sen. Street), HB 1888 (Rep. Rabb), HB 2524 (Rep. Schmitt)

HB 706 and SB 104 would require that incarcerated people are counted in their home districts in the U.S. Census, instead of their prison district (a practice known as “prison gerrymandering”). HB 706 advanced out of committee in Sept. with a recommendation to also count college students and those in local jails. It is on the House tabled bill calendar, but could be called for a House vote at any time during session. SB 104 has not gotten a committee vote yet.

HB 1888 would allow lawmakers to request that the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing prepare a demographic impact statement for any law amending the crimes or judicial code, in recognition of racial disparities in imprisonment. The bill has not gotten a committee vote yet.

HB 2524 would make many amendments to Pennsylvania's Right to Know (RTKL), including a provision to bar RTKL requests from incarcerated people with limited exceptions (such as if the records pertain to the incarcerated person directly), and those deemed “vexatious requesters.” This bill passed the House and is now being considered by the Senate State Government Committee.

MASS INCARCERATION AND THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Dr. Jill McCorkel and Christina Folan of Villanova University, Philadelphia Project for Women and Girls

Martin Boyce thought he had the perfect Halloween costume. He planned to attend a neighborhood party dressed as Oscar Wilde, the late 19th century Irish writer best known for his flamboyant dress. In 1895, Wilde had been tried and convicted in an English court for the “crime” of homosexuality. One of the elements of proof used by prosecutors was Wilde's gender atypical dress. Boyce, living in New York City in 1968, could not possibly have imagined that merely dressing as Wilde would land him in legal trouble.

Nonetheless on Halloween night a New York City police officer arrested Boyce on the premise his clothing was “too feminine.” At the time, it was not unusual for NYPD officers to invoke antiquated laws prohibiting “masquerading” in an effort to harass and arrest drag queens and other people who did not conform to prevailing gender norms. The legal basis for such arrests was weak and the practice itself clearly discriminated against people thought to be gay or lesbian. Nonetheless, variations of this discriminatory po-

licing practice continue and Republican legislators in several states have introduced bills to regulate gender expression (and even to prohibit teachers from discussing it!!). Boyce beat his case but not on Constitutional grounds. He won by producing receipts showing that he purchased his costume from a unisex store.

Until recently, it was impossible for researchers to know the extent to which people who identify as LGBTQ+ were impacted by mass incarceration. LGBTQ+ is an acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.” The “+” sign is included as a reminder that there are limitless sexual orientations and gender expressions. While law enforcement and carceral institutions collect data about sex, race, age, religion, and other sociodemographic characteristics, they rarely collect data regarding gender expression and sexual identity.

The Prison Policy Initiative recently released a report documenting the impact of mass incarceration on the LGBTQ+ community. In brief, research demonstrates that members of the LGBTQ+ community are arrested, incarcerated, and placed on community supervision at much higher rates than people who are straight and cisgender (the term “cisgender” refers to people whose gender identity aligns with the biological sex category they were assigned to at birth). Arrest rates are particularly high among trans people and queer women. Overrepresentation begins early—LGBTQ juveniles are much more likely than straight and cisgender kids to get caught up in the juvenile justice system.

In 2019, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people were 2.25 times as likely to be arrested over a 12-month period than straight people. Lesbian and bisexual women are four times as likely to be arrested as straight women. Gay and bisexual men are 1.35 times as likely as straight men to be arrested.

Further, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are incarcerated at a rate that is more than three times the rate of the general public. As with the arrest data, differences in incarceration are driven disproportionately by lesbian and bisexual women. One in three women in prison (33.3%) identify as gay or bisexual. One in twenty men in prison identify as gay or bisexual (5.5%).

A 2015 survey of incarcerated LGBTQ people suggests that they face additional hardships in prisons and jails. They are more likely to be placed in solitary confinement and face higher rates of sexual victimization behind bars. A whopping 85% of those surveyed reported spending time in solitary during their bid. In addition, LGBTQ+ people are ten times more likely to be sexually victimized by another incarcerated person and two and a half times more likely to be sexually victimized by a staff member. Victimization rates for incarcerated heterosexuals are 1.2% (victimized by staff) and 2.1% (victimized by another incarcerated person).

Why are LGBTQ+ people, especially lesbian, bisexual, and trans women, so overrepresented in the criminal legal system? There is no one simple answer. Social rejection contributes to poverty, homelessness, marginalization, poor mental health, and renders people—particularly kids and teens--vulnerable to violence. Rejection comes from a variety of sources: families, peers, educators, religious leaders, employers, social workers, healthcare workers, politicians, and the general public. Solving the problem means eliminating laws & practices that explicitly discriminate against people based on their gender and sexual identities. Beyond that, it's essential to improve public understanding and strengthen support structures for LGBTQ+ people within our neighborhoods, schools, religious communities, workplaces, and families.

MAIL ROOM

We edit the letters we publish. Originals will not be returned. All letters must be signed for consideration. Names will be withheld from letters only on rare occasions. All allegations of misconduct must be publicly documented before anything will be printed here. Any statistics used in letters should be supported by sources.

MESSAGE FROM LIFERS' GROUP INC. IN MASSACHUSETTS

Daniel L. Holland of MCI Norfolk, MA

I am a board member of Lifers' Group Inc. here in Massachusetts. We are reaching out to inmates who may be interested in helping us build a centralized national database on an array of prison related issues. Currently we are gathering information on commissary, and will then be gathering information on educational/vocational opportunities in each state offered to inmates. Lifers' Group Inc. is seeking information (from each state) pertaining to: Canteen Price Lists, Tablet Programs, litigation, as well as other services offered. Information will be compiled and posted on our Facebook page (@lifersgroupmcinorfolk) along with our other reports and research. Please send information to:

Based at the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Norfolk, the Lifers' Group Inc. is a group composed of people serving life and long-term sentences who are dedicated to helping members lead active and productive lives, advocating for prison and sentencing reform, and educating their members and outside citizens on criminal justice issues and prison reform. With an emphasis on rehabilitation over retribution, the missions of the group are to improve rehabilitation, self-respect, and quality of life in Massachusetts prisons; eliminate barriers to collaboration between the community-at-large and prisoners; coordinate with organizations striving for similar goals; and share knowledge of issues such as reducing recidivism, improving safety, and building relationships between family members, fellow prisoners, supporters, and the community. Some of their areas of focus include education, parole and commutation, medical, legislation and litigation, jobs, family relationships, and program opportunities.

SPC AND SMART COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANCE

Bennie Brimage of SCI Mercer

Dear Brothers and Sisters that are inmates of the PA DOC,

May this information you are about to read assist you in dealing with your mail and packages. Upon reading, please disseminate this information to everyone inside the system with us, so they can share it with their loved ones. Change will not be possible if we do not make efforts toward that change through positive actions; only then will the Secure Processing Center and Smart Communications work with us to better serve our needs.

www.MailGuardTracker.com is a service provided by Smart Communications to assist us with our mail delivery. Your loved ones can go onto this website, which is part of Smart Communications, and open an account to track your mail from their offices to the very minute it is printed out by your institution.

This is how it works: your family, upon opening a free account with MailGuard, will receive a PIN number to place on the return address section of the envelope. After the account is opened, whenever they write to you, Smart Communications will notify them via email as to the exact date and time you received their mail. Smart Communications will also notify your family of the exact minute it is emailed to your institution. Now for the shocker: the very minute your mail is printed out by your institution, that information is sent via email to your loved ones along with a copy of the contents of your mail. I have been using this system since last year, and it is amazing that Smart Communications claims to provide us with the fastest, safest service that can be done.

For books, pictures, magazines, etc., the Secure Processing Center (SPC) is not as bad as I once thought they were with delivery of our items; we just weren't aware of how their system worked for us, and no one would educate us to that fact. Whenever your loved ones order something for you, they must place a tracker on the item(s). The tracker can only inform your loved ones as to when it arrived at

the SPC, but that is all you need for this process. Once your family knows your package has arrived, they simply have to wait one week before contacting the SPC about your package(s). When your loved ones call or email (both sets of information are available on the DOC website), they need to inform the SPC of your name, number, and what day your package(s) arrived at the SPC. The SPC will then verify the package did arrive and that it has either not been processed yet or that it has been delivered to your institution. If it has not been delivered, they will inform your loved ones when they expect to deliver it to you. I generally file an informal grievance whenever my packages have not been delivered to me within a week of arriving at the institution. The Secure Processing Center states that their rules and policies dictate that our packages be delivered to the respective institution's inmate within three weeks of it arriving to them.

So, there you have the tools to be efficient and unify us as a single body.

Your Brother In Solidarity.

NO WAY HOME

Shawn Younker of SCI Greene

Home is where the heart is. A place of sanctuary and safety, comfort and companionship, nourishment and nostalgia. An ever-treasured hearthstone where burdens are routinely left at the door. Little soothes the spirit more completely than a pleasant evening spent in the company of kith and kin. Not many settings exist in this troubled world quite as rewarding as that precious sanctum that we've come to call our home.

But the Pennsylvania Parole System has other ideas. There is an old-world adage saying something to the effect of ‘just do your time and go home.’ In decades prior, that wisdom might have been exalted by citizens and outlaws alike. Times have changed, however, and that old-school proverb has dissolved into a hideous cesspool of overweening authority. Perhaps the slogan should now read: just do your time — then go to another institution.

Today, the halfway house option is all the rage. Alternative residency is stipulated, demanded even, way more than it is recommended. In more than a few cases, parolees are ordered into halfway homes after their prison term is finished, even when those secondary measures are found to be unnecessary. Reportedly, some offenders even own their homes and have families waiting there, but they are still herded into boardings under the foul whim of obscure parole mandates.

If an offender is homeless, without reliable kinfolk, without reliable support systems, or possesses no means of adequate lodging, then the halfway house proves to be a crucial, indispensable resource. Some parolees need it, for good or ill, and have no other realistic choice.

But some of us do not need it and are being forced into it anyway. Unfortunately, we are now seeing more and more of these sinister developments. It would seem that our parole department has found an all new low, on the evidence — yet another diabolical means of furthering the trauma of estrangement.

As if our families weren’t alienated enough, the parole system now exerts their authority like some sadistic lever, prying apart our beloved relationships with spiteful mechanisms and cruel counterweights.

One might naturally presume that if an offender boasts solid and upright familial ties and is free of domestic violence and other unsavory charges within the home, then that redeemed soul should be rightfully permitted an unrestricted pass back into the arms of waiting loved ones. Right? Wives and children should expect nothing less from our state’s penal system.

This just isn’t the reality, however. As of late, the Pennsylvania Parole System has been tossing those much-deserved homeplan applications like yesterday’s news. Perhaps the extra paperwork is just too strenuous? Perhaps their caseload is at the tipping point? Or maybe the offender’s last name brings back some ugly schoolyard memories...

Whatever the case may be, men who have served their time and paid their dues and debts are being shuffled into those alternatives for an indefinite time. As fiendish as a parole agent’s logic may be, a smart boy knows better than to question the motives of a monster, especially when the cretin in charge manipulates freedom like some low rent hustler.

To deny a man his home and family is to deny him his livelihood. Only a baseborn tyrant with a heart steeped in hate could employ these vile tactics day after day and still muster enough self-respect to sleep restfully at night. Somewhere, somehow, our judicious machinery has blown an essential circuit. The warning lights of fairness and morality are bright, flashing.

Indeed. The horrors of life in a halfway house are well-known. Drug havens, as they have been coined by state officials, or crime centers rife with addiction and degeneracy. Unrepentant felons and lifelong dope fiends harbor no qualms with slithering in and out of these places with regularity. As it stands, we haven’t heard an abundance of success stories originate from these quarters. More often than not, staff and personnel take wagers on how many arrests might transpire in any given week.

Compassion doesn’t come cheap in the prison system these days. And it is frequently the non-violent, low-risk offender who pays the price, however unjust. These wards are typically miles away—counties, even—from old stomping grounds. Nevertheless, the parolee is expected to secure gainful employment to pay room and board. Meanwhile... their family suffers.

Some men create laws for the betterment of society. Men with wives, children, and loving families. And under these laws, reformed men cannot even get back to families of their own. Home might be where the heart is, as they say, but the Pennsylvania Parole Board doesn’t care who might live there.

INTELLIGENT REBELLION

Mark White of SCI Benner

A wise person once said, “It is better to fight for something than against something.”

Even though we are incarcerated individuals, as grown men and women, we want to feel that we are choosing our actions instead of being told what to do and when to do it. Sometimes it is noble, and even courageous, to rebel, but the satisfaction will be short-lived if, in the name of standing up for yourself and others, you sabotage yourself in the process.

I see it far too many times: people going off at the CO’s or some “white shirt” because something needed to change, but most of the time the one “going at ’em” ends up being the one “going over.” And when it’s all said and done, nothing was accomplished at all because those people didn’t possess the power to make any of the necessary changes anyway. All that it led to was giving up the little leverage that was had and the few freedoms that we are afforded on

this side of these walls. There are ways that we can make a real difference though. We don't have to "go at 'em" if we put in the necessary work instead. Take the time and do the research to achieve meaningful change so that you, along with all the other incarcerated individuals, can enjoy the fruits of your labor.

For a lot of us who are considered to be "OG's" due to the amount of time we have in these institutions, we have a duty to educate younger people coming into the system on a better way to get things done without having to endure the same consequences we endured. Stop exposing our loved ones to the heartache and pain they feel when we're being pepper sprayed and thrown into solitary confinement for months on end simply because we decided to stand up for change. It's time to start using our brain instead of our brawn in order to effect real progress and a sustainable impact. There are state and federal constitutions in place to protect us from all forms of cruel and unusual treatment while incarcerated. The Pennsylvania DOC has hundreds, if not thousands, of policies in place that it is legally bound to abide by.

If you want to make a real difference when you "go at 'em," do it in a way that is so intelligent they'll have no choice but to take you seriously every time you decide to stand up for something. Go to the library and learn what you can do. Educate yourself on how to be relevant whenever you speak up. All of the information is right there for you to use to gain knowledge and to add to your intelligence. Do this instead of resorting to anger when you feel that something isn't right, which has the potential to add to your sentence.

LITTLE THINGS

Daniel McGinley of SCI Waymart

An inmate buys a box of oatmeal. When he finishes the last packet, he uses the box to organize the contents of his cabinet. The search team comes, dumps the items out, and takes the box. The seeds of resentment are fertilized by authority's callous indifference to the condition of those subject to it.

A judge presiding over what is supposed to be a fair trial allows hearsay testimony to be introduced without following the prescribed procedures. The prosecutor withholds a critical document that proves a lack of evidence that the alleged crimes were committed. Defense counsel knows that these errors violate his client's rights but cooperates with the judge and prosecutor to get his client convicted. Once convicted, the system's demand for finality makes it almost impossible to correct.

If the ability to perpetrate these abuses is legislated

away, those in power will be resentful. But what about those who are abused? Could the appalling disregard for justice contribute to the mass gun violence sweeping our country? Legislative reform is desperately needed. Repeated violations of a defendant's rights by a public official should be met with removal from office, at the very least.

PAROLE WITHIN THE DOC

John Trabosh of SCI Laurel Highlands

Throughout my years spent in and out of the DOC, I have seen hundreds of what the DOC would call "model inmates" get parole hits for many reasons. I now believe that there are many things wrong with the parole system in Pennsylvania institutions, and I believe we need to figure out a way to fix these issues.

For years, I have heard so much talk about abolishing the parole board within these institutions because the board does not know us—the institutional staff who live with us daily know who we are and if we should be paroled. How can the parole board decide anything from a 1–10 minute interview?

The institution I am in right now has an information channel with a segment called "Fireside Chat." It is comprised of a deputy and two inmates who talk about everything going on in the DOC and within our institution. They also have different staff come in and join, such as the principal of education and the superintendent. One week, they had a member of the parole board on to answer questions, and he stated that there are many factors in deciding to parole someone, but basically, it is based on how they feel about you in the interview. So, our parole is based on how someone feels about us in a 1–10 minute interview, someone who does not know us and may not have ever even met us before that day! How is that just or right? I believe that if our institutional staff supports us in parole, we should get it.

As an inmate, I have made it to the highest level I can. I have a 2MC code and work in the "community work program." Now, you would think that after making it to that point you would be granted parole, but over half the inmates here and from other SCIs that I know who have their 2MC and work for the community work program go to see parole and end up getting a hit for being a risk to the community. How is that possible? How can we go about getting these issues fixed? Also, how can you be a "model inmate" with no write ups for many years and still get a parole hit for manipulating the system? It seems that you are wrong even if you are doing the right thing!

ACTIVITIES AND DEPARTMENT UPGRADES

Brian Randolph of SCI Mercer

Most of the equipment here in Pennsylvania DOC has been around for decades. Tracks, for instance, are muddy and worn down in the yards, and in need of black top renewal. It would be greatly appreciated if prisons in Pennsylvania could receive upgraded weight-lifting equipment in the yards and gyms, including rubber free weights and safer universal machines outside and more cardio equipment.

Due to COVID-19, exercising is very important for the cardiovascular system. It offers many physical benefits, and it gives us empowering benefits mentally for both older and younger inmates. Come yard time, we have inmates standing around because there are more of us waiting in line trying to work out with the very little equipment; either equipment is broken or there will be only 12 machines for inmates when there are between 100 and 300 inmates in the yard at a time.

In addition to the 12 machines in yard, SCI Mercer only has three pull-up bars, one whole court, four half courts, and two handball courts. Also, there's no pavilion when it rains, so if you have an electric guitar or keyboard, it will get damaged. We were even stopped from having protective bags for our electronics in yard here. Basically, when we have recreational time, they make it as uncomfortable as possible. I'm saying Insha Allah; may God make it easier on all of us; Amen.

THINK

ABOUT THOSE AROUND US

Matty Dunbar of SCI Mahanoy

In my last article, I wrote about the correctional officer union president's role in low vaccination rates among members. But, I must also say that the blame must go both ways for those prisoners who love to be around the officers' desks from early in the morning until late at night.

The point that I really liked was when the prisoners at SCI Somerset found out about the seriousness of this COVID-19 pandemic, so they stood together and made sure that the institution was clean from top to bottom, and they also stayed away from those staff members who did not get vaccinated. I truly wish the prisoners at SCI Mahanoy would take a page out of what was happening at SCI Somerset on how to keep those around you out of danger.

I was transferred out of SCI Somerset in July to SCI Mahanoy, and it was like stepping into the Twilight

Zone. I've talked to a few of the brothers that I know from other institutions, and they were trying to tell me how bad this institution is. I told them that I heard about everything already; it did not take me even 72 hours to see the crazy things that happen inside of this prison. There was an outbreak of COVID-19 in my housing unit, and a lot of prisoners were moved off of the unit and placed in a unit for those prisoners who had the virus. Some of those prisoners were allowed to stay in the housing unit, which I felt was a bad idea, but who am I to say something; I just got here and I did not want to step on any toes.

Then, I had to say something, because after seeing what I saw, I did not care whose toes I was stepping on. Another thing that made me speak up was when I'd see an officer at his desk coughing and sneezing with no mask on. Also, when walking around the Housing Unit, I saw a few Prisoners on the unit, breaking their necks to run and pick the diseased paper towels up with no gloves on! This is why I said that it goes both ways. When I saw all of this, I knew at that time that I was indeed in the Twilight Zone.

As of March 30, 2022, Secretary George M. Little has issued a DOC order informing us that after two years of being in lockdown, we are going back to some pre-COVE operations. That's a good thing because we can now go out into the visiting room with our families like we used to. We can participate again in our education and other programs, and we can come together as one for our religious services.

We don't know what's down the line, but for those prisoners at SCI Mahanoy who take a break at the officers' desks, that's not cool because from day one you were part of the two year lockdown problem. Watch the news right around the corner. There can be a new wave of COVID-19 on the rise. We don't need to be quarantined again because of you running around spreading disease into the general population. Let's be careful!

RESPONSE

TO BRADSHAW'S JAN/FEB "DOC MAIL SYSTEM"

Gregory Dubar of SCI Benner

Ms. Bradshaw,

I have heard the concerns for the PA mail situation, and I'm continuing to work on the 2009 permanent injunction I secured for inmate Earl Vance Jr. and all state inmates regarding Policy 803-1).

I was authorized by the Commonwealth Court to accompany Vance as a shadow advocate civil paralegal and to assist him in presenting evidence. You can read more about my case:

Com ex reL. Mr. Earl R. Vance Jr. v Beard, 2008 Pa Commw. Unpub. Lexis503 (decided 5-12-08) No. 592 M.D.2006.

DOES PENNSYLVANIA VICTIMIZE ITS PRISONERS TO GET RICH?

Wayne Thomas of SCI Albion

No one across Pennsylvania (PA) is raising public outcry that this state is one of the largest contributors to mass imprisonment in US history! In plans laid out by government officials and groups that fuel the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), the DOC prison system commits chattel slavery against its own citizens. Through long years of anonymity, the system has shielded itself from outside public scrutiny and has distinguished itself by crime fear-mongering.

Calling back to the October 25-27, 1989 SCI Camp Hill riots here in PA, there were 13 state prisons in Pennsylvania. From then on that count has risen to a total of 24 prisons. Groups that invest in prisons and policies that drive mass incarceration are professional opportunists who have monopolistic control over the state and federal prison markets. These lobbyists are buck passers who, just for the sake of turning a profit, are out to imprison ALL peoples in this country! There are prison lobbyist networks in politics everywhere in your state. It is a method of Nazisitic social justice where, nationwide, enormous taxpayer incomes and social costs are siphoned out of your state to them.

The costs of mass incarceration do not contribute to the social good of reducing recidivism because it is the incarcerated person's family and public consumers who are really paying the cost of mass incarceration. There are great needs for abolitionist actions in this system of mass imprisonment and chattel labor costs in the United States. You will find no worse prison system in overdue need of reform than Pennsylvania's. Are citizens from your state suffering like this?

In solidarity to all liberation organizations who commit to building an international movement to abolish the Prison Industrial Complex, keep pressing on. In resistance, our unity!

RE: ARTICLE IN *STRAIGHT AHEAD!*

ISSUE NO. 2, WINTER/SPRING EDITION, LEGISLATIVE CORNER,
CAMPAIGN UPDATES, PAGE 2

Monroe Merritt of SCI Phoenix

I've just finished reading the Campaign Update in the above-mentioned issue of Straight Ahead! regarding SB835 and HB2347. In this article it states, "There is hesitancy among both Republican and Democratic leadership around including people convicted of 1st degree murder, and we are working hard to build a consensus for including 1st degree."

It's time for some straight talk. A reality check if you will. For the last 40 or more years, Lifers Organizations at SCI's Graterford (now Phoenix), Dallas, and Huntingdon have pursued an all-or-nothing strategy in the pursuit of parole for lifers. Throughout these years, at various times, we've been told that the legislature is not interested in including people convicted of first degree murder in any of the bills that have been submitted thus far.

Yet, here we are again, 40 or more years later, still continuing to pursue this failed strategy. What's wrong with this picture? Put a bill in for second degree murder only! Try to get what you can get, and what you can't get, come back and try to get it later. What is so difficult about understanding the obvious? Unfortunately, it is the lifers themselves who are to blame for this failed effort. Most of the lifers in leadership positions in the lifers organizations are people with first degree murder convictions. And they are afraid that if we pursue a bill for second degree murder only, that they will be left behind.

I get it. They want to get out. And that's understandable. I have no issue with that. But for 40 or more years, we have given legislators two choices: all or nothing. And each time, they have chosen nothing. It is way past time to submit and push a clean bill for second degree murder only. Once that is done, come back and fight for those with first degree murder convictions.

We need to abandon this pseudo altruistic and irrational notion that we're all in this together and we just wish to get everyone out at the same time. It ain't gonna happen! The legislature has made this abundantly clear countless times. I say "psuedo altruistic" because what's really going on with us is selfishness born out of desperation by those with 1st degree murder convictions. And that has been perpetuated for decades resulting in all lifers getting absolutely nothing. Insanity is defined by doing the same thing over and over, but expecting different results.

Sometimes you have to chip away at the iceberg.

IGNORANCE IN PRISON AND SOCIETY

Carol Hann of SCI Muncy

It boggles my mind how many news articles and activists promote, “hire an inmate, give them a second chance to prove themselves.” Who gives the innocent inmates a chance to prove themselves? I can prove, without a shadow of doubt, that I’m a wrongful conviction, due to ignorance in society. I can prove my trial attorney is a scumbag who took a bribe, does society care? No. Do the courts care? No. Does the prison industry care? No. I’m a body count; I’m doing my part by being in prison, so the prison can get government funding. Does the office of Disciplinary Council care? No. Does Parole care? No. At the end of the day, who cares? NOBODY CARES.

Society is too busy to worry about us. Society is brainwashed into thinking everyone in prison is guilty. Welcome to American Society. So, before you wonder why 3 of your neighbors are in prison, wonder if any are innocent and have lost everything they have because of corruption of the courts and society. Also, ask what you can do to change society to do the right thing and get them out.

Something to think about.

BOOK REVIEW

HALFWAY HOME BY REUBEN MILLER

John Hargreaves of the Prison Society

We all know how tough prison and post prison life can be.

This recently published study by Reuben Miller deftly illustrates it. He grew up in a poverty plagued neighborhood. His father was incarcerated during Miller’s childhood and his brother cycled in and out of prison. Miller is fascinated with the way men and women attempt to succeed after leaving jails. Now a professor at the University of Chicago, Miller profiles his brother and many people he met while serving as a chaplain at Cook County Jail. He sadly demonstrates the profound afterlife of mass incarceration. His brother does multiple stints in prison because, branded as a felon, he can’t find a job, housing or successful drug and alcohol treatment.

We all know that 95% of guilty pleas are the results of plea bargains. Through in depth interviews with people he meets, Miller shows how waiting for a court hearing can grimly become too frustrating to tolerate. The people he sees in prison staunchly stand by the fact that they had to plead guilty in order to get time served or a penalty that they felt was in their best interest to hasten their release. This mirrors my observations, as almost half the people I meet in county jails are too poor to post bail so many consider a plea deal.

Miller repeatedly stresses the impact of incarceration. He shows that it is insidious, devastating and comprehensive. He says the incarcerated are, “three times as likely to die from heart disease, four times as likely to die of cancer” and says the formerly incarcerated are, “129 times more likely to die within just two weeks of their release than members of the general public.” He firmly believes that poverty, crime

and racial discrimination tear apart the communities these people come from. His main point is that a system driven by fear is not ripe for a rational approach to an honest justice system.

PANDEMIC RESPECT

Keith Lambing of SCI Greene

The pure lack of respect towards inmates, combined with the micromanaged facility, make it lethal to all, and especially to inmates doing Life or many years. What sets me off to speak up is that we’re being punished for the correctional officers’ carelessness during the pandemic.

Our families have been fully vaccinated to visit us. Our kids (12 years and older) have been vaccinated to visit us. Yet, the correctional officers rarely wear masks, are often not vaccinated, and still have vending machines in their chow hall, where they crowd around with staff from all over the jail (medical, RHU, and population).

Why does the food in visiting rooms get suspended? Why can’t our families and kids, who are vaccinated, eat a snack during a visit? Why do our visits get suspended? Why are we only allowed one religious service per month? After all, it is the inmates and our families who are the ones being responsible.

Editor’s Note: The PADO announced that as of April 18th, visiting play areas for child and food and drink vending reopened system-wide.

VISITING SERVICES SURVEY

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Temple IRB Approved
05/02/2022

Title: Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on visitation experiences in PA correctional facilities

Protocol No.: 29131

Investigator: Jamie Fader

Daytime Phone Number: (215) - 870 - 2821

Email: jfader@temple.edu

RESEARCH CONSENT:

You are being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. This consent document describes the information that we believe most people need to decide whether to participate.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH?

We are seeking to better understand your experiences with both virtual and in-person visiting services, especially in relation to new restrictions and changes made in response to COVID-19. Your responses to this survey will be used in a research study being conducted in partnership with Temple University and the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS RESEARCH? WHAT HAPPENS TO ME IF I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE?

If you decide to participate, you will complete a survey that should take between 20-40 minutes. Your participation in this survey will not have an effect on your parole.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

There is a low risk of breach of confidentiality. Your participation in this research will be held strictly confidential; however, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. You do not have to answer any questions that make you too uncomfortable.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION COLLECTED FOR THIS RESEARCH?

The survey should be mailed to the Pennsylvania Prison Society, who will remove the envelope before sharing with Temple research staff. The only identifying information remaining will be your institution name and unit type. The findings from this study will be shared in a future issue of the Graterfriends newsletter. A report of the results will also be distributed to the Pennsylvania Prison Society and the Department of Corrections. We may also publish the results of this research. All results will be shared in the aggregate (i.e., numbers, percents) and any identifying information will remain confidential.

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, contact the research team at the phone number or email listed above on the first page. This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (215) - 707 - 3390 or irb@temple.edu if:

1. You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the researchers;
2. You have questions about your rights as a research participant.

Version date: May 5, 2022

We are seeking to better understand your experiences with both virtual and in-person visiting services, especially in relation to new restrictions and changes made in response to COVID-19. Read read the form on the previous page before beginning this survey.

Please do not fill this out again if you have already done so. Please also refrain from including any identifying information, as we are looking to keep everything confidential. Thank you.

*Please fill out this survey and mail it back to us at:
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605, Philadelphia, PA, 19102*

1. Have you received a video or in-person visit in the past year?

A. Yes, a video visit. B. Yes, an in-person visit. C. Yes, both a video and in-person visit. D. No.

2. On average, how often do you receive a video visit?

A. Daily B. Several times/week C. Once a week D. Several times/month E. Once a month
F. Every few months G. Rarely H. Never.

3. Would you like to receive more video visits?

A. Yes B. No

4. Who has visited you using the video visitation mode? Please circle all that apply.

A. Mother B. Father C. Spouse or partner D. Child E. Sister F. Brother
G. Grandmother H. Grandfather I. Friend J. Other (please tell us what their relation is to you) _____
K. Not Applicable

5. How satisfied are you with the current video visitation experience?

A. Very Satisfied B. Satisfied C. Somewhat Satisfied D. Not Satisfied E. Not Applicable

6. Please rate your experiences with video visits on each of the following areas on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=poor; 5=best):

Convenience 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
Video quality 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
Sound quality 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
Wait time 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
Visiting area 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
Interaction with staff 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
Overall satisfaction 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

7. What issues have you experienced while using video visits? Circle all that apply.

A. Bad service/connection B. Image quality C. Sound quality D. Limited access to kiosk E. Freezing
F. Inconvenient/inadequate times available G. Difficulty scheduling H. Visitors' lack of access to
necessary technology (internet access, webcam, smart phone) I. No issues J. Not applicable

8. Have your loved ones experienced any of the following issues with accessing the video visits during the past year? Circle all that apply.

A. Not having a computer B. Not having a webcam C. Not having a smart phone

D. Lack of high-speed internet access E. Unable to afford fees F. Other (please specify): _____

9. Which of the issues that you circled in the previous question are the biggest barrier(s) to you receiving video visits?

A. Lack of access to computer B. Lack of webcam C. Lack of a smart phone D. Lack of internet access

E. Cost of a video visit F. Other (please explain): _____

10. Have in-person visits resumed at your facility?

A. Yes B. No C. Not Applicable

11. On average, how often do you receive an in-person visit?

A. Daily B. Several times/week C. Once a week D. Several times/month E. Once a month

F. Every few months G. Rarely H. Never

12. Would you like to receive more in-person visits?

A. Yes B. No C. Not Applicable

13. How satisfied are you with the current in-person visitation experience?

A. Very Satisfied B. Satisfied C. Somewhat Satisfied D. Not Satisfied E. Not Applicable

14. Who has visited you using the in-person visitation mode in the past year? Please circle all that apply.

A. Mother B. Father C. Spouse or partner D. Child E. Sister F. Brother

G. Grandmother H. Grandfather I. Friend J. Other: (please tell us what their relation is to you)

_____ K. Not Applicable

15. Please rate your experiences with in-person visits on each of the following areas on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=poor; 5=best):

Convenience 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Scheduling 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Wait time 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Visiting area 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Interaction with staff 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Overall satisfaction 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

16. Which of the following issues are the biggest barrier(s) to you receiving in-person visits?

A. Cost of visit B. Transportation issues C. Distance to facility D. Lack of childcare

E. Scheduling conflicts F. Restrictive visitation policies G. No one to visit H. Other

17. If you have received both video and in-person visits, which type of visitation do you prefer?

A. Video B. In-person C. No preference D. Not Applicable

18. If you have not received a visit in the past year, do you have a desire to receive a visit?

A. Yes B. No C. Not Applicable

If you selected that you would not want to receive visits (and would like to explain why), please explain briefly:

19. If you have not received a visit in the past year, what has kept you from receiving an in-person visit? Circle all that apply

A. Cost of visit B. Transportation issues C. Distance D. Lack of childcare

E. No one to visit F. Don't want to receive a visit G. Other H. Not Applicable

If you selected other, please explain briefly in your own words:

20. How satisfied have you been with communication about visitation policy changes from staff?

A. Very Satisfied B. Satisfied C. Somewhat Satisfied D. Not Satisfied E. Not Applicable

21. How have you learned about visitation policy changes?

A. Posted bulletins B. Graterfriends newsletter C. Word of mouth D. Family/loved ones

E. Other (please specify): _____

22. What are your concerns about the current visiting options available to you?

23. What do you think would improve the visiting options available to you?

24. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your visitation experiences?

All identifying information will be kept confidential.

25. What facility are you in?

26. How long have you been in this facility?

27. Are you in the RHU? Yes No

28. What is your housing unit?

29. Security classification?

30. Age:

31. Gender:

32. Race/Ethnicity:

33. What date did you fill out this survey?

*Thank you for your feedback. We will share a report of our findings based on your responses in a future issue of Graterfriends. As a reminder, please **DO NOT** fill this form out more than once, and please leave all identifying information off the above three pages.*



READER SURVEY

We welcome comments and suggestions from all readers.
Please complete this form and mail it to Pennsylvania Prison Society.
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605
Philadelphia, PA, 19102

1. Readers may have noticed that the May/June issue of Graterfriends did not include our usual resource guide. Making sure that our resources are accurate and legitimate is most important to our team, but we can't do it without you. If you have suggestions on what our resource list should include, please write them below.

You may also write to our office at any time to request specific resources using the address above.

2. We are still seeking submissions for our 2022 creative issue. You may draft a submission below. Submissions will close mid-September 2022. We are in need of the following:

**Visual Art
Lyric Essays or Memoir Pieces
Short Stories**

First Class postage is required to re-mail

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Philadelphia, PA 19102

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Subscriptions cannot be refunded.

Starting January 1, 2020, all multi-year subscriptions must be exact; any overage will be counted as a donation to the Society (i.e. a \$10 check will be processed as a 3-year subscription and a \$1 donation).

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