

Ivan Diaz # 213619
MacDougall C.I.
1153 East Street South
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January 20, 2026

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Legislative Office Building
Room 2500
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Testimony for Correctional Advisory Committee's
Public Hearing

Dear Sir/Madam:

When you receive this testimony, I hope it finds this Committee well. The purpose of my testimony is to help find a solution or improve the areas of condition of confinement addressed herein.

As noted above, my name is Ivan Diaz # 213619. I have been incarcerated for a flat 34 years this coming April 9, 2026. I have been confined in the correctional facilities of our State longer than I would have ever imagined. As such, I have first hand knowledge of the transformation the Department of Correction has gone through since the times of Correction's Commissioner Meachum to Quiros, whom I got to know since 1992. Having lived inside Connecticut's prison

facilities for over three decades many changes have occurred but addressed herein are the ones affecting me the most.

First, is the healthcare provided by the DOC's medical staff. I will turn 59 years old in April 2026. I have always maintained in good physical condition throughout my incarceration. However, in April or May of 2023, I suffered an injury to my right knee. Specifically, I had a torn meniscus. After complaining for about a year, in 2024, I was given an MRI at UConn Health Center. The MRI revealed that I had complex tears on both of my knees' meniscus. It also revealed that I had loose bodies in my knees. In lay-man's term, those are commonly known as "floaters," which causes wear and tear in the knees, if not removed. In addition, it revealed scarring tissue in the ligaments and tendons from tears that have healed on their own over the years.

However, with the complex tears in my meniscus, which can normally be fixed with arthroscopic surgery. I was given two cortizone shots to relieve the pain. Today the problem is progressively worst and my ACL and meniscus injuries are constantly causing my left knee to swell causing pain and difficulty walking. As a result, I am unable to work out. I have gain weight and while trying to compensate for the pain and discomfort, I have developed other pains and discomfort on my hips and the ball of my left foot. I am given medication that can only mask the pain, but does nothing to repair the soft tissue injuries

thus suffered. If I write to medical, I am charged three dollars only to be told that I have arthritis even though I have no familial history of such malady. It is a case of misdiagnosement and negligence and not compatible with the holdings of the United States Supreme Court's holdings on the 8th Amendment's right to adequate medical treatment.

Dental is no different. I recently went to the dental here at MacDougall C.I., because I had what appeared to be a tooth infection due to a cracked tooth. The Dentist gave me some antibiotics for several days and put some medicine on my tooth. About seven days later, even though the infection on my gums had began to dissolve, the Dentist wanted to pull my tooth without first consulting me on my initial visit. I did not write to have my tooth pull. Nonetheless, I was made to sign a form that stated that I refused/not ready to have my tooth pulled. These tactics are designed to misinterpret one's medical or dental decisions and absolute health care staff when future conditions appear and one is denied treatment on account of past decisions.

As it is, at the time of this testimony, I have yet to see a knee specialist to be re-evaluated for orthoscopic surgery.

Second, concerning in-coming and out-going correspondence. Specifically, with legal mail. I am currently involved with post-conviction proceedings. The timely filing of documents is an essential part of pro-se litigants. Some documents

have time limitations and deadlines that are detrimental to a litigant's proceedings, if not met on time. At the present, we don't have a Public Notary in the facility to notarize financial affidavits or other legal documents that require notarization. Moreover, when legal mail is received at the facility, it is held for ten and thirteen days before it is given to an individual.

Case in point. I filed a Petition for a New Trial in Bridgeport's Superior Court. Due to the retirement of the named Respondent upon whom the summons was to be served on, the documents were returned. A summons need to be served on the opposing party and returned thereafter, to the Clerk of the court, at least, twelve days before the return date provided. Because the legal mail is held for approximately ten to thirteen days before it is forwarded to the pro-se litigant one has to refile a new summons, waiver of fees and necessary document all over again. In case of an appeal, failure to file a notice on time can mean losing the opportunity to appeal one's case, or procedural default.

This committee, being composed of Jurists or persons with experience thereof, can understand the implications of this dilemma. I imagine that there are some situations with the mail that may require screening of all in-coming mail. However, legal mail is one of the most important and time sensitive pieces of mail in which case must be delivered in a timely fashion. Late delivery can be detrimental to one's litigation or appeal.

Third, concerning the nutritional value of the food service. Currently, the food service for the Department of Correction is at minimal, enough to keep one from starving to death. On paper, the portions are consistent with the allowable daily calorie intake. The names of the meals themselves represent, on paper, quality meals. However, when one is the recipient of such meals for 365 days, for decades on end. It is not the same as to one looking from the outside in.

Some of the meals served are not only tasteless, but not nutritional or well cooked. For example, Turkey ala King to the undiscerning, may sound like quality food consistent with ingredients that one would find at home or a restaurant. This, however, is not the case in the D.C.C. Turkey ala King is nothing more than a cup of rice poorly cooked, with a soupy tasteless sauce sprinkled with slices of red & green peppers and a few pieces of some type of meat, which is prepared at one facility, chilled and stored in a cooler for two weeks before it is reheated and served. Sometimes the food is spoiled or expired. Nonetheless, it is served. I understand that saving money and cutting back on expenditure is a part of the D.C.C.'s agenda in this economy, but in the name of cost saving, there's more harm and expenditure than savings. Healthy food means healthy bodies, which saves costs in medicine and treatment reducing litigation in some cases.

Lastly, concerning mental health and physicality. It is known by years of psychological studies that being confined to a cubicle for prolonged periods of time, day after day, month after month, year after year, for decades at a time does damage to one's mental and physical health. The adage, "Only the strong will survive and the weak will perish," is truism in the Department of Correction.

Having been incarcerated for nearly three decades and a half, I have seen perfectly healthy individuals wither away physically and mentally and die in an oppressed state with dementia and muscular atrophy. It's a sad state that will eventually befall on the majority with a D.S.I. sentence. That is death by incarceration. This is the trauma sustained by prolonged periods of time locked in a cell or a block, day in - day out, for months and years on end without access to outside air or gym recreation to divert the mind from the stress of being cooped up in a cell or dayroom day after day walking in a circle like a scene from "Midnight Express." A 1980s movie based on a prisoner in a mediterranean country. Some may argue that our American Prisons are humane. Nonetheless, the destruction to the mental state and physique of an incarcerated individual here in the United States is the same. It is true and I have been seeing it, because I have been living it.

I know that our correction facilities are doing all the positive things to reform and rehabilitate those who are willing to change their lives and become law abiding productive members of society. I am one of those

individuals. I speak for myself, but there are many incarcerated who cannot speak for themselves due to the circumstances pointed out above, that permeate throughout our correctional system. This testimony goes with saying that over the years I have become fond of some of the finest of Correction Officers and Staff who've helped me along the way to the present, sharing mutual respect and understanding. To them, I give my utmost respect as I do to this Joint Committee on Judiciary. Thank you for this opportunity to be heard.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Frank Cruz". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first name "Frank" and last name "Cruz" clearly distinguishable.