

Name: Luis Velez

Title:

Organization or Agency:

Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed

NA

Testimony:

1) I have been incarcerated for over 13 years and have endured many hardships due to prison's psychological effects. In all the institutions I've been in, I have encountered racism and a lack of humanity in contrast to the state's prerogatives of safety and behavior correction. I have been accused of assault on staff when the officer felt I disrespected his uniform, if this officer was to be wearing a body camera the truth would have been seen. I spent days in chains in a cell constantly being harassed and spent over a month in segregation for something I didn't do. However, there was no accountability for the wrong done to me.

2) I see my incarceration as an opportunity to continue to grow as a person who educates himself with information for a better understanding of the world, and enhance my chances of economic and personal joyful success once my liberty is given. But the circumstances in prison with the officers constantly locking the facility have created a more hostile environment, and the frustration of all men, staff included, have created a drug use infected environment. The safety of the men in prison has been reduced, and we need accountability for this phenomenon, in a place that calls for responsibility and rehabilitation. All this takes a toll on the mind as you don't know who could be under the influence and attack you for no reason, causing a freedom concern for an individual.

3) Staff members are not equipped with the proper credentials to assist a prisoner in correcting wrong or immoral behavior as they lack these virtues, if not the training. I have been challenged by newer officers because of cultural mentality of "us against them". Instead of officers bridging the gap, understanding that us humans have been a victim of some sort who have also hurt someone and victimized them as that's the case with many incarcerated people, they mistakenly wedge cohesiveness and safety. My goal is to walk as a free MAN and not as a victim of a carceral system that seeks to deter people from humanity.

4) Last: I would like for science and accountability to be taken seriously. The DOC should take an approach where civility thrives in these Walls and an individual doesn't come out more hurt than when he/she first came in. I would like for legislators to know that as we reform in here for our actions, I call to them to reform laws that were implemented for punishment, without a sense of a second or first chance at life, and the possibility of a real personal change while incarcerated.