

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

16 Jan 2026

To Whom it May Concern:

RE: 2025 Conditions of Confinement Rpt.

As a person who is currently in the care and custody of the State of Connecticut, made aware of this meeting regarding input from interested parties on the 2025 Conditions of Confinement Report (a Report that, so far as I am aware of, I am unable to access) I nonetheless feel compelled to write to you all to bring some things to light that, from my perspective in here, are areas of grave interest that effect the conditions of confinement in ways not easily seen unless brought to light.

Though I could just as easily write about physical conditions seen — the many things like Rodents so present in Hartford, when I brought the issue to a superior CO's attention he merely shrugged his shoulders and said to me "welcome HCC," or the prevalence of black mold in the showers, or the fact that in the winter months in Hartford (and year-round here at MacDougall) the climate is kept so cold that staff and CO's have to wear jackets and knit caps while the housed population can only layer up on t-shirts... Even more than these physical conditions, there is a systematic denial of fundamental Rights that needs to be looked at, addressed, and hopefully corrected.

If this committee is only being called to address physical conditions, then I thank you for your time. But if being systematically denied my ability to cast a meaningful, counted vote in the 2025 election, or if

systematic denial of the ability to speak to an attorney, or if systematic denial of the ability to make what could have been a phone call that possibly saved my wife's life — then please read on.

## Issue #1 - The Right to Vote

My voting rights were restored over a decade ago, upon my successful completion of probation. Though charged with a heinous crime, my right to vote was not been lost — at least that's what all the flyers and posters say. Yet I do not believe anyone in custody has actually been able to vote legally — this is because the process of voting by absentee ballot via mail, one that has been legislatively reviewed and approved, is not able to be followed by someone in the care and custody of the Connecticut Department of Correction.

Per DoC regulations, every item mailed out must follow a set series of systematic procedure: each item must be stamped to say "this correspondence originated from a Connecticut Correctional Facility" on the outermost envelope — yet absentee ballot instructions clearly indicate that the ballot envelope provided cannot be written on or altered, and must be submitted as is, else the ballot be void.

Also, DoC handles the mail from the county clerk as "Legal Mail" — meaning it will have to be logged and signed for by the recipient and the delivering DoC counsellor. In my attempt to cast a meaningful vote in this past 2025 election, my absentee ballot was not delivered to me until after the election day!

## Issue #2 - Phone Call Restrictions (Daily)

Connecticut DoC has outsourced the placing & handling of all inmate phone calls to Securus, Inc. out of Plano, TX. Per DoC Regulations, inmates are limited to six (6) calls per day — but there is no provision for times when network issues cause a loss of connection, a failure by the tablet (used to make the calls via the "Connect Me" app) to process audio through to the VoIP call, or times the app just crashes. These each count as 'a call' — and there are no exceptions available, even in an emergency.

On March 29<sup>th</sup> 2025 my wife was in extreme pain when I spoke to her, just after 8pm on a Saturday evening. When I tried to call my friend, whose wife is a nurse, to have them check in on her, I received the system message informing me that I had reached the daily limit for phone calls. No means of appeal for calls that failed — and, because Connecticut DoC has outsourced their handling & placing of calls, there was literally nothing I could do. She was found dead in the morning. There needs to be a way for those systematic limits to be overcome — especially when someone's life is at stake.

## Issue #3 - Phone Call Restrictions (Attorney #'s Restricted)

I am an intelligent inmate, with the Rockville Public Defender's office assigned to my case. Yet I cannot call his office from a phone or from my Securus tablet — "That number is restricted" is what I hear, when I try. Upon my wife's passing, I tried to get in touch with the Inmate Legal Assistance Program (ILAP) for Probate Representation. Though my call to ILAP was able to

get through, the various legal aid/legal assistance/Veteran's assistance numbers that ILAP provided me with were systematically blocked - in spite of the fact that I had never before tried to call any of them. I received the very same "That number is restricted. Good-bye" message I get when I try to call my attorney. I had other inmates try calling those numbers as well - and they too got the same result. Securus has a blacklist in place of attorney firms and it is systematically preventing access to legal counsel.

Please note: When I received a letter from ILAP stating that they could not provide me with any legal assistance in finding a Probate attorney, as that was/is not within their charter of 'conditions of confinement' - I raised these same three issues to Attorney Gagnon of the ILAP in my reply letter, to which I have not as of this writing, received a response. Not that showering with black mold, having a mouse poop on your sock in the middle of the night, or shivering with cold while Corrections staff is able to wear jackets & wool caps to stay warm; not that these conditions of confinement issues are minor, but to to systematically deny ones rights - to vote, to speak, to seek help, to talk to legal council - these, in my estimation, seem to be both far more problematic and widespread.

I certify and attest that everything I have said here is true, and I hope these issues may be investigated, verified, and overcome. Thank you for your time & attention, and please contact me if I may provide any further assistance.

  
Robert Cohn Sr. #4451540 Page 4 of 9