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Title:
Organization or Agency:
Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed
NA

Testimony:

Steadfast Salute--

The issue I bring to you today is that Connecticut has no viable classification system as it relates to housing assignments—a deficiency that has very harmful consequences. I should know—I was clearly a victim of this deficiency.

In 2020, I was housed in a cell with someone with whom I was obviously incompatible—someone whose known sexual behavior was completely at odds with my own behavior and my beliefs as a Muslim. The resulting catastrophe was totally predictable and should have surprised no one.

While eating in my cell, I was ambushed from behind by this person, with whom I'd previously fought. As I reflexively leaped to my feet to defend myself, I slammed my head against an overhead steel t.v. stand, causing a massive brain bleed. Because this trauma caused me to lose my memory of the event, the damage went undetected until it nearly cost me my life a year later. I ended up having two surgeries, and have been forever altered as a result!

The point I wish to make here is that, if Connecticut had a viable classification system, we would never have been put in a cell together, and this episode would not have happened.

The people making these arbitrary decisions have no expertise or understanding of how to put compatible people together to avoid violence, maintain safety and promote rehabilitation. Or that is not their intention!

I am a Wesleyan University student who for no good reason was recently moved from a housing unit designated for kitchen workers, carpentry shop, and Wesleyan students, into a unit known as the most unruly in the facility. Since my move, several other Wesleyan students were also summarily moved from this unit, and for no good reason—one—Jory Strizich—just yesterday.

What does ordering the moves of us Wesleyan students say about the DOC's classification system, which disrupts the stability and lives of people engaged in educational pursuits, while leaving in place those who are not doing anything to transform their lives? And what does it say about the new Commissioner's professed commitment to promoting programming and education as evidence-based ways to advance the goal of rehabilitation prison-wide?

Any day now, I may lose everything, maybe even my very life, due to the flawed classification system here. That's my story, and it is ongoing. Thank you.