

To: Senator Sue Dechambeau, Representative Charlotte Warren, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee  
From: Robert Payzant

I am writing to testify as to the neglectful and harming atmosphere that solitary confinement creates for those unlucky enough to find themselves stuck in that prison within a prison. I have spent more than 18 months in isolation. Apart from human contact and separated from humane interaction with those whose job it is to see to my physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.

I remember the cold cells, where I was given two sheets, a thin blanket, and a worn out thin mattress which was placed upon a concrete platform.

I remember the attitude of indifference from the guards, having to ask again and again for something as simple as toilet paper before finally receiving it, usually hours later. The guards only gave me time if I acted up and created what they considered a disturbance. Then they were very quick to give me attention. So that reinforced to all of us that negative behaviors such as violent outbursts and self harm was the only effective way to get attention or to be heard. Are those the cycles that promote positive change?

I remember the noise, how it reverberated throughout the entire unit as other men in solitary succumbed to the madness they were driven to because of untreated mental health issues.

I also remember the absolute silence where the only company that I had was my thoughts, my fears, my anguish. I will tell you that noise in my head during those times was louder than the usual screams and banging on metal doors and stainless steel sinks/toilets that were the norm on an average day.

I remember having only one 10 minute phone call per week. Having to choose who to call and hoping that they would be available because those calls came at the discretion of the guards, not when it worked best for me.

I remember being in 4-point restraint as I was escorted only a few feet down the hall where I would take my showers. I was not guaranteed a daily shower as any privilege I was allowed came at the "availability" of the guards.

I remember watching and listening to grown men break down mentally and cause self harm

I remember men being extracted from their cells and upon their eventual return telling me of being put in a restraint chair, naked, and being maced on their private parts, and left indefinitely in that state until at the guards discretion they were allowed the ability to clean themselves off.

Now Commissioner Liberty ( whom I respect) will say these are outdated testimonies from 7-8 years in the past. And while none of these things were done right in front of him,( he was the warden at the prison during this time) his analysis of the situation is not correct

In 2018, not even 4 years ago, I was placed in administration segregation due to an investigation that I was involved in. After two months I was cleared. But during those two months I was psychologically and emotionally tormented and had no support whatsoever.

I was locked in my cell for over 23 hours on most days and when, on the occasion, I had recreation it was in a secluded section of the unit where I was completely separated from everyone. I couldn't even see another human, let alone talk to anyone. It was outside in what could be explained as a yard that was approximately 25'x25', brick walls on all 4 sides, and the sky above me was all but blocked out by several layers of fencing. Nothing to do but walk in circles or do calisthenics which I could easily do in my cell.

I had no tv.

No canteen privileges (other than stamps and minimal hygiene).

One call per week

And the way I was treated by the guards, well let's just say I went from being the Poster Boy of reform and re-entry to guilty and convicted in the mind of opinion. Everything I had worked for to recreate my identity was stripped away and I was forced to suffer alone

I ask that it be acknowledged that Solitary Confinement is inhumane and that The Department of Corrections be forced to end this practice.