



Press Release

Date: Monday, February 1st, 2021, 9:00 – 9:45 am (EST)

Stop Solitary CT Hosts Virtual Press Conference to Introduce the PROTECT Act on National Freedom Day; Releases Petition with 1000 plus Signatures calling on Legislature to Pass the PROTECT Act.

Hartford, CT – Bright and early on a snowy Monday morning, legislators Gary Winfield (Senate Judiciary Chair) and Steve Stafstrom (House Judiciary Chair), Robyn Porter (Judiciary Committee), and Quentin Phipps (Co-chair Progressive Caucus) joined Stop Solitary CT to speak about their support for the [PROTECT Act](#), long overdue legislation that would close Northern Correctional, mandate substantial correctional oversight, and end the use of prolonged isolated confinement in the Connecticut Department of Correction.

Introducing the press conference, Stop Solitary CT Steering Committee Member Barbara Fair reflected on her own experience and said, “There is absolutely no place in a civil and humane society for a dungeon-like facility like Northern in our state. It serves only to break the will of human beings rendering them unable to function once released and most will one day be released back into our communities. If Corrections is about public safety then closing down Northern and treating incarcerated people in a humane manner is a no-brainer.”

Legislators firmly voiced their support for Stop Solitary CT’s campaign:

“It is unthinkable that Connecticut has almost no external correctional oversight and that we still use solitary confinement, a tool of torture. Stop Solitary has provided the blueprints for pragmatic and effective change and I fully support the PROTECT Act,” said Rep. Quentin Phipps (D-Middlesex County)

“It is past time to close Northern Correctional Facility and end the use of punitive isolation. I look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Corrections, fellow legislators and advocates to improve conditions for those in detention,” said Steve Stafstrom (D-Bridgeport), House Chair, Judiciary Committee.

“We’ve been trying to get this done for years and we have no time to lose. We must get it done this year. Solitary confinement does irreparable damage and costs the state way too much. We have an obligation to save the state millions, reduce violence in prisons and mental illness. The time is NOW to end this inhumane treatment and deliver dignity and respect instead. It’s the right thing to do,” said Robyn Porter (D-Hamden, New Haven)

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, Representative Toni Walker (D- New Haven) could not attend the press conference, but sent over the following statement: “I stand with Stop Solitary in Connecticut calling for legislation that promotes reasonable oversight and humane treatment. This will be monitored by reestablishing an ombudsman in the Connecticut Correctional Agency.”

Families with incarcerated loved ones also spoke about their experience with correctional brutality and the forms of extreme and prolonged isolation that their children routinely experienced in DOC custody.

“The privilege I was born with prevented me from ever in a billion years imagining my own gentle and harmless child’s last words would be ‘cant breathe’- gulped out under the heavy weight of multiple correctional officers brutally attaching ultra-tight 5 point restraints after mercilessly overdosing him with chemical agent and then leaving him to die alone in solitary confinement, chained to a metal cot. The PROTECT Act would have saved him from this homicide,” said Colleen Lord.

Speaking about her son who was recently transferred from Northern to MacDougall, Karen Colt said, "It is incomprehensible to me that in the United States of America men can be placed in extended solitary confinement for asking an authority figure difficult questions. No violence, no threats, just a request for a viable safety plan. My son got COVID 19 just weeks before his final release date and could have died having not seen the sky in almost a year. Just because he expected DOC to provide a safe environment," said Karen Colt

The event also featured the formal release of Stop Solitary CT’s petition calling for Legislature, Commissioner of Correction, and Governor to abolish solitary confinement and close Northern Correctional Institution, the State’s supermax prison. **Well over 1000 Connecticut residents signed the petition and considered ending solitary to be an issue that “will likely affect who [they] vote for in future elections.”** On the call, Stop Solitary CT Committee Member Kevnesha Boyd announced the release of the petition and further elaborated that, “Working for the Department of Correction jeopardized my morals, integrity and sanity. My counseling ethics to ‘Do No Harm’ was on the line every day, leading me to feel like I was a part of the problem by ignoring the abuse of power. Incarcerated people are currently living in dehumanizing environments with immoral policies and practices. The PROTECT Act will create the institutional change needed within DOC.”

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