



Press Release

Date: Thursday, February 4th, 2021

Stop Solitary CT Statement on Northern Lawsuit ***Disability Rights Connecticut v. Department of Correction.***

Stop Solitary CT welcomes the filing of *DRCT v. DOC*, a lawsuit challenging the Connecticut Department of Correction's abuse of incarcerated people with mental illness at Northern Correctional Institution. The complaint confirms what we have long known: the DOC is torturing people.

We applaud this important step toward exposure and accountability for the harm caused by the DOC. Extreme isolation and in-cell shackling, described in detail in the lawsuit, must end. But this lawsuit does not go far enough. *DRCT v. DOC* focuses on the most severe abuses: the torture inflicted on people with mental illness at the supermax Northern. We need to address the injustices facing the people represented in this lawsuit, *and* we need to make sure everyone in the system is protected from torture and abuse.

Reflecting on her own experience as a mental health counselor with the DOC, **Stop Solitary CT Steering Committee Member Kevnesha Boyd** said, "The DOC does not address the real needs of incarcerated people. It is extremely hard to rehabilitate someone in an environment that is violent, abusive, and isolating. These types of environments induce mental health conditions for incarcerated people and staff. Closing Northern is a step towards ending the pervasive abusive and inhumane treatment within Connecticut's prisons and jails."

"The Connecticut Department of Correction has taken great pride in the thoughtfulness which has been devoted to the development of its procedures and practices. Sometimes, they have gotten it wrong. What makes isolation even more shameful to us as citizens—and detrimental to those incarcerated in our facilities—is the fact that it is deliberate and the result of conscious choice. We assert that Solitary Confinement as it is used in Connecticut, amounts to policy driven torture. For this reason, and because real oversight has consequently been shown to be a necessary, we strive to pass the PROTECT ACT," said **Bob Gillis Stop Solitary CT Steering Committee Member and Former CT DOC Warden**.

As yet another lawsuit exposes the inhumanity endured by the people in DOC custody, we demand action from our legislators. This session, we must protect incarcerated people by passing the PROTECT Act.

Stop Solitary CT Steering Committee Member Barbara Fair said, “May this lawsuit pave the way for ending this egregious behavior throughout every correctional institution in Connecticut including youth and women facilities. State sanctioned torture is wrong wherever it occurs. Northern is just one of many facilities where abuse is normalized in Connecticut. I’m grateful for this legal team’s dedication to upholding the humanity of all people.”

DRCT v. DOC highlights just how urgently the PROTECT Act is needed in Connecticut. We need an end to the inhumane practices of prolonged isolation and in-cell shackling for everyone; we need to shut down Northern, where the worst of these abuses occur; and we need oversight to stop the DOC from continuing to inflict torture on our community members.

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