



For Immediate Release

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Release: Stop Solitary CT Holds Call to Action for 2022 Legislative Session

New Haven, CT — On December 10, 2021 (International Human Rights Day), Stop Solitary CT held a call to action to mobilize support for the PROTECT Act, which would create statutory restrictions on the use of solitary confinement and establish independent oversight of the Connecticut Department of Corrections (DOC). The event featured a screening of “Up the Ridge,” a documentary about the deadly consequences of politically expedient incarceration policies, and a panel with legislators and individuals recently released from Connecticut prisons.

Last June, Governor Lamont vetoed the PROTECT Act (SB 1059) after the bill passed both the House and Senate. In its place, the Governor issued Executive Order 21-1, which included no provisions for correctional oversight and gave incarcerated individuals less additional out-of-cell time than what was guaranteed in the PROTECT Act. Stop Solitary CT plans to make a renewed push to get the PROTECT Act signed into law during the 2022 legislative session.

Panelists Ray Boyd and Michael Braham described the brutal conditions they faced while incarcerated and cited recent lockdowns at Cheshire Correctional Institution as a key example of why the DOC needs independent oversight. According to Braham, officers at Cheshire have been calling out sick since April to express opposition to the PROTECT Act. “They timed their calling out to keep the building short-staffed so they didn’t have to let us out,” Braham said. “They had the building locked down for days at a time.”

Boyd reported that Cheshire has been without hot water and heat for more than a month. “The water pipes burst on the street, and they were bringing in portable water heaters to hook up to the water system,” Boyd said. “It wasn’t sufficient. Although they had the water heaters, the water was still cold.”

State Senator Gary Winfield (D-New Haven, West Haven) spoke about the importance of having oversight mechanisms and solitary confinement restrictions enshrined in law. With sufficient pressure on legislators, some form of oversight legislation could pass in the General Assembly next year, he said.



Reflecting on the event, Stop Solitary CT Lead Organizer Barbara Fair said, "The stories of men recently released from prison reinforce the need for independent oversight over DOC. Guards undermining the Governor's executive order by organizing call outs so facilities are understaffed, forcing people to remain in their cells from 22 to 24 hours a day. No hot water and heat for over a month at Cheshire. Without oversight, these things can continue with impunity."

Stop Solitary CT Steering Committee Member Ann Massaro said, "A central tenet of Stop Solitary CT is to raise and amplify the voices of incarcerated people. Last night's event did just that. Two of the men who spoke were just released from our tortuous prison system. Their powerful, painful words help to guide our work toward not only ending solitary confinement, but dismantling this racist system."

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