

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hartford, CT- Standing in front of Stop Solitary CT's replica cell, legislators and advocates emphasized the urgency of passing legislation that would eliminate the use of long-term isolated confinement in the state and bring Connecticut's criminal justice system up to par with states throughout the rest of the country. They urged legislators and constituents to visit the replica cell located in the lobby of the Capitol to experience the isolating environment inflicted on Connecticut prisoners for weeks, months, or even years at a time.

"It's an important part of the conversation to give legislators even the slightest inkling of what it's like in a solitary cell," said State Senator and Co-Chair of the Judiciary Committee Gary Winfield, D-West Haven/ New Haven. "Every legislator should spend time in the cell before making a decision on this legislation."

Despite the fact that solitary confinement is defined by the United Nations as torture and widely understood by healthcare professionals as an irrevocably damaging practice, Connecticut routinely utilizes long term isolation in its prison system.

"Connecticut is one of the only states in the country with little to no independent oversight over the Department of Corrections. When we talk about ending the use of torture in our prison system, we need a mechanism to ensure that actually happens," said Barbara Fair, a steering committee member of Stop Solitary CT, who spoke at the press conference.

In addition to the harm it inflicts on individuals, the use of long term isolation is extraordinarily expensive and has the tendency to make prisons and our communities less safe by damaging, rather than rehabilitating people in the criminal justice system.

"Stop Solitary CT's work has been incredibly important," State Representative and Co-Chair of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus Brandon McGee, D-Windsor/Hartford said. "I encourage everyone to visit this important replica. Those who are incarcerated deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and I look forward to working with Senator McCrory [also of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus] and advocates in the coming months on this important issue."

“There is no evidence that this form of incarceration results in rehabilitation. In fact, it's just the opposite. To deny the humanity of the people incarcerated in this deeply inhumane way is to deny our own humanity,” said State Representative Christine Palm, D-Chester/ Deep River/ Essex/Haddam.

“The advocacy behind this movement is incredible, and the necessity of the work is obvious. Now is the time to apply pressure on the Governor’s office to ensure that the legislature is not fighting the executive branch. If we are unified in our vision, we can ensure that we treat everyone as a human being-- no matter the circumstance, an especially important message in today’s political climate,” said State Representative Josh Elliott, D-Hamden.

A key part of Stop Solitary CT’s demands is the pressing need close Northern C.I., an outdated facility designed solely to house people in long term isolation. Their demands also include the need to increase time out of cell, eliminate the use of abusive restraints, and create an oversight body for the Department of Corrections. The specifics of Stop Solitary CT’s proposals can be found in their model legislation-- an Act Promoting Responsible Oversight, Treatment, and Ensuring Correctional Transparency (PROTECT Act).