

PANEL OF PRISONERS MEETS WITH LEGISLATORS  
CURE-ARM, INC. POSITION PRESENTED

by Timothy J. Muise

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On October 23, 2015, an unprecedented event took place at the state prison in Shirley, Massachusetts. A panel of nine prisoners met with members of the Legislative Harm Reduction Caucus to present the CURE-ARM, INC. position that both the Executive and Legislative Branches of our state government were involved in a criminal conspiracy to subvert the Massachusetts reform law.

In attendance at this meeting were two state senators, six state representatives, and twelve staff members of other members of the General Court acting as proxy. The nine prisoners covered many topics which supported the CURE-ARM position such as the non-existent commutation process, the severely flawed parole process, the lack of any medical release vehicle for seriously ill prisoners, and other details of just how the department of correction ignores the reform and rehabilitation laws with approval of both the Executive and Legislative branches.

Specific examples were given of rights violations and the array of legislators were given a bit of an education in the history of rehabilitation here in the Commonwealth. Many had heard the remarks made by former Massachusetts Governor, William Weld, in 1992, which included sending prisoners "On a tour through the circles of hell.", and returning them to "The joy of breaking rocks.", but ironically none of them knew to whom Dictator Weld made these remarks. He made them to a gathering of the assembled Attorneys General of the 50 states who all afforded him a standing ovation. This is significant, and had to be made clear as to why to these legislators, because none of these "top cops", these law school graduates, raised their hand and challenged Weld about the reform law in Massachusetts and how these comments were admissions that he was going to break the law. This fact seemed to have an impact on the legislators.

The Weld era comments are so important because the employees of the department of correction have never lost that attitude that we need to be breaking rocks and touring hell and as such they work in cooperation with the other government entities in denying us our "right" to rehabilitation as detailed in The Acts of 1972, Chapter 777, and G.L. c. 124, ss. 1(e); laws which CURE-ARM has vowed to have fully enforced. Legally, with this four decade denial of rehabilitation, all of the prisoners subjected to that purposeful and malicious denial should be immediately released, but the powers that be dare not even consider that truth. We at CURE-ARM embrace the truth and fight for its life.

On the whole the event was a success, but it is just step one in a long process of getting the prisoner voice involved in this process. The men who presented at the event, in front of disgruntled prison staffers who had been left out of the loop, took great risks as retaliation in prison is always a reality, but CURE-ARM feels many have sacrificed a lot more for far less to make this land great. We are just doing our part.



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MILFORD

## Organization advocates for prison health care

By Zachary Comeau  
Daily News Staff

MILFORD - Donna Barnoski stood quietly as her daughter and granddaughter spoke about her husband across the street from the Mass. Department of Corrections headquarters on Maple Street Saturday.

Barnoski and her daughter, Holly, who is president of Citizens United for the Rehabilitation Errands Adherence to the Rehabilitation Mandate, or CURE-ARM, were outside the DOC attending a rally in

an effort to improve prison conditions and ensure inmates are given proper health care. About 10 people attended the rally called Occupy Milford, organized by CURE-ARM.

Signs read, "If prisons worked, there'd be fewer," and "Solitary confinement is torture." Another said, "Deval Patrick: M.I.A."

Barnoski said her husband, William, an alleged Winter Hill Gang affiliate who was convicted of the 1988 murder of Lowell Bookie John McDermott, became ill while in prison,

was wrongfully sent to the isolation cell and his medical needs were neglected.

While in prison, her husband had a brain tumor, but prison officials didn't take notice until it was too late, said Barnoski. Although he had surgery to remove part of the tumor, doctors said it would grow back.

He died earlier this month, but not from surgery complications or the brain tumor - but from MRSA and sepsis, which

THE RALLY, OF



Linda Jenkins took part in a rally by the group CURE-ARM, which is lobbying for criminal justice reform, Saturday in Milford. DAILY NEWS STAFF PHOTO BY JESSICA HORN



# RALLY

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she said could have been treated and avoided if the prison acted to treat him quicker.

But Barnoski said she was unaware of the full extent of her husband's medical problems until the other inmates informed her over the phone.

"If it wasn't for them, we would have never known he had a brain tumor," she said.

Barnoski and her daughter, Holly, created an organization centered on improving the conditions of prison systems and ensuring inmates get medical treatment when needed, as well as compassionate release when an inmate becomes terminally ill.

Barnoski said she and her family could have taken care of her husband if he was released. At 74 years old and terminally ill, he was no longer a threat, she said.

"I want inmates who are in the hospital to get better treatment," she said.

Her daughter wants to establish a "health care bill of rights" for inmates who become ill in prison, including a health care proxy.

"A health care proxy is and should be a law-abiding thing," she said.

Arlington resident Susan Mortimer, who's now disabled and whose blind brother is imprisoned at Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center in Shirley, said her brother had to have his surgically repaired finger amputated after an altercation with prison guards.

"Human rights abuses are endemic," she said. "They happen everyday."

Mortimer said that with 5,000 guards to 11,000 prisoners, the prisons are overstaffed with guards, who she said can be "extremely violent."

"Nothing is different," she said. "They're just expanding the system."

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The group "Cure-Arm", that are looking for criminal justice reform, held a rally, Saturday in Milford. DAILY NEWS  
STAFF PHOTO/JOHN THORNTON