

Ms. Shira Schoenber
Republican Newspaper

Dear Ms. Schoenber,----- Thank you for the Article that you wrote about our visit. I used your article for making adjustment for my web-side and further provide additional information.
<http://betweenthebars.org> (luis-d-perez).

Again Thank you.



Restrictive state prison visitation policies spur outrage, lawsuits

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By **Shira Schoenberg**, sschoenberg@repub.com

Lucinda Fisher's son is in maximum security prison.

Under new regulations that went into effect in March, her son is only allowed to put five people on his list of approved visitors. He can update the list every six months.

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"I have a huge family, my son has siblings," Fisher said.

Fisher looked at Department of Correction officials at a public hearing in Boston on Thursday. "Can either of you pick five people you deal with on a regular basis for six months?" she asked. "Can you narrow it down to five? Can Governor Baker narrow it down to five?"

The new policies, Fisher said, seem to be "geared toward breaking the families, breaking the inmates."

The Department of Correction's new visiting procedures were launched earlier this year, spurring outrage among prisoners, family members and their advocates - and prompting four separate lawsuits, which are pending.

The advocates say the new visitation policies make it harder for inmates to maintain relationships with their families and friends and make it less likely they will be able to successfully reintegrate into the community.

"The evidence supports that efforts should be made to make visitation more open and more accessible wherever possible," said Jesse White, staff attorney for Prisoners' Legal Services of Massachusetts. "Over the last year, DOC has been moving in the wrong direction on visitation, substantially restricting and reducing visitation without any rational basis."

THE ART WORK IS THE SIGNAL OF WHERE I INTERJECTED A
PARAGRAPH BETWEEN THE SPACE LEFT ON THE ARTICLE "RES-
TRICTIVE STATE PRISON VISITATION POLICIES."



"When you have a capricious system of government, the prisoners become Political Prisoners."

"In Prison Reform, Money Trumps Civil Rights, mass incarceration in Massachusetts would continue to exist as long as it served STAKE HOLDERS and interest group that look at the prison as a business industry."

REFERENCE OF THE LEGAL SCHOLAR DERRICK A. BELL.

According to Prisoners' Legal Services, Massachusetts is now one of the most restrictive states in the country with regard to visitation.

Until March, state prisoners could have an unlimited number of visitors during set visiting days and hours. Under the new rules, they are restricted to a list of five to 10 visitors, depending on their security classification. The list can be updated twice a year. Prisoners can apply for exceptions to the cap only if every person on their list is immediate family and they want to add another immediate family member.


Visitors must undergo a preauthorization process.

No more than two adults can visit a prisoner at one time. Each visitor can only receive approval to visit one prisoner in the system unless the second one is an immediate family member.

The Department of Correction says the rules are meant to prevent the smuggling of contraband, including drugs.

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"The Department of Correction is committed to protecting the safety of inmates, staff, and the public while offering inmates diverse opportunities to benefit from re-entry programs that increase their chances for post-release success," said department spokesman Jason Dobson. "In response to an increase in drug and contraband-related incidents involving visitors, the Department has implemented new visiting procedures and uses dogs trained to passively detect drugs as tools to address this problem."



"Since the Willie Horton Political Fiasco back in 1987-1988, the Massachusetts Department of Correction has become a monarchy, The Kingdom of business industry. The inmate serving time or waiting trial are indeed political prisoners regardless of the crime that they have been charged with."

"If there is a corruption among Law Enforcements and Politicians, justice does not apply equally, and the poor have to be the example of punishment."

But inmates and their advocates say the policies make it harder for inmates to maintain a support system in the the community.

Four lawsuits have been filed, in Middlesex, Suffolk and Worcester counties, by inmates challenging the policies.

Among the plaintiffs:

- Mary Todd, 68, is serving a life sentence in a medium security prison. She has 13 children, 38 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren, and wants permission to have more than eight visitors.

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- John Stote put his ill mother on his visitor's list. But she has not yet been approved, and he worries she will die before she can visit him.
- Vincent Rivera has family in New York and Philadelphia, so it is difficult to know who will be able to visit him and who should be included on his list. He did not submit any names in time, so he must wait several months to update his list and get any visits.
- Rashard Brown put his girlfriend on his list, so he is unable to exceed the cap to let his entire immediate family visit. He had to leave his sister off his list.
- Kenneth Sequin reached his cap with his siblings and in-laws, so had to leave off his friend who visited him monthly for 23 years.

Lawsuits are challenging the caps, the infrequent list updates, the restriction on how many visitors someone can visit and the preauthorization process.

"Plaintiffs contend that these provisions are arbitrary, capricious and an exaggerated response to the DOC's purported concerns about preventing visitors from introducing drugs into the facility," attorneys from Prisoners' Legal Services wrote in one of the lawsuits.

At a recent hearing, called to take testimony on regulations relating to dog searches of visitors, officials from the Department of Correction instead heard complaint after complaint about the new visitation rules - even though the department had held hearings before implementing those rules. ¹

Michael Carey runs community programs for ex-offenders to help them re-enter society, and also visits inmates before they are released. He was visiting two inmates, but is now restricted to one. He often encourages friends and family to visit prisoners, but he said now visitors are "immediately faced with barriers" since lists are only updated every six months.

Prisoners, he said, "have had to make very difficult choices between family members and friends, many of whom don't live in the area and only come a couple of times a year."



"When the poor steal from the rich, it is called 'crime' When the middles class steal from the upper class, it is called 'mismanagement' - When the upper class steal from the middle class, it is called 'improprieties', When the middle class steal from the poor, it is called 'noble obligation'. - When there is corruption among the politicians and rich people, white collar crime takes place, and that is called 'kickbacks, fraud or money laundering'. - When the politicians of both both branches of the government steal from all sectors of America Society, it is called 'fiscal responsibility' - AND when the poor steal from another poor it is called 'tough luck'.

REFERENCE UNKNOW

Karen Pulido, a former corrections officer whose adult son is in prison serving a life sentence, said families testified against the new rules previously, and they went into effect anyway. "It seems our comments go unnoticed since families of inmates and inmates are the only ones affected by any changes," Pulido said.

"We understand and fully appreciate the need for security measures to prevent the introduction of illegal items, but I don't see how these changes prevent such things from happening," Pulido said.

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Pulido added, "Regular visits and communication are the only way to foster and nurture family bonds and community connections. It's the only way to facilitate a healthy return to the community."

Mary Valerio, whose husband is in prison, said, "What has struck me most about the prisons is the absence of any humanity. To the DOC the men are only numbers, but to us they are our husbands, fathers, brothers, sons and family members."

Valerio said family members "are your partners in their successful re-entry, not your enemy," and visitation should be expanded, not reduced, to lower recidivism rates.

Don Perry, who spent 18 years in prison, said his daughter was born three days after he got to prison in Walpole. As his daughter grew up, he had the opportunity to see her on family days, where they could play in the prison yard. "That visit was instrumental in helping me maintain my relationship with my daughter, family and community. It helped contribute overall to my rehabilitation," Perry said.

Perry read a letter from a prisoner who asked the state to reconsider the policy.

Souza Baranowski Correctional Center (SBCC)

Security Level: Maximum Security

Location: Shirley

Annual Operating Budget: \$58,972,196

SBCC opened in 1998 and is one of the Department's newest correctional facilities. This high-tech facility offers inmates employment opportunities through Correctional Industries and a full range of educational, vocational, and substance abuse programming. SBCC also includes two specialized residential units that offer inmates enhanced mental health treatment services.

MCI Cedar Junction (MCI-CJ)

Reception & Diagnostic Center

Location: South Walpole

Operating Budget: \$44,637,202

This facility is the Department's Reception and Diagnostic Center for male offenders. Numerous assessments are completed to determine an inmate's initial classification designation and to develop an individualized program plan. MCI-CJ also houses the Department Disciplinary Unit.

MCI Framingham (MCI-F)

Security Level: Medium

Location: Framingham

Annual Operating Budget: \$31,945,033

This facility is the Department's Reception and Diagnostic Center for female offenders. It is the oldest operating female prison in the country. MCI-F provides a comprehensive network of gender responsive, trauma informed programming for women who are civilly committed, serving county and state criminal sentences, or detainees on awaiting trial status. MCI-F offers employment opportunities through institutional job assignments and the community service program National Education for Assistance Dogs Services.

South Middlesex Correctional Center (SMCC)

Security Level: Minimum/Pre-Release

Location: Framingham

Operating Budget: \$5,156,748

SMCC provides inmates access to a comprehensive network of gender responsive, trauma informed programming. A family reunification house is located on the grounds. This program is designed to enhance reentry by improving parenting skills.

MCI Concord (MCI-C)

Security Level: Medium

Location: South Concord

Operating Budget: \$60,576,890

MCI Concord is a medium security facility that houses approximately 1350 male inmates. Representatives from the local community have provided a wide variety of highly structured volunteer facilitated programs for over 30 years. This facility also provides residential substance abuse treatment services and other programs designed to prepare inmates for their eventual return to the community.

MCI Norfolk (MCI-N)

Security Level: Medium

Location: Norfolk

Operating Budget: \$52,319,183

MCI-N is the biggest institution in the Department, housing approximately 1,500 inmates offering a full range of academic and vocational education programs, sex offender treatment, residential substance abuse treatment services, and the largest Correctional Industries program in the Department. It offers several industries shops employing over 230 inmates and hosts several community service programs including the National Education for Assistance Dogs Services and Volunteer Optometric Services of Humanity program. A 16-bed assisted daily living unit was constructed in April 2008 to better meet the needs of the aging population.

Pondville Correctional Center (PCC)

Security Level: Minimum/Pre-Release

Location: Norfolk

Operating Budget: \$6,560,667

PCC's primary mission is to prepare inmates for their transition to the community. Emphasis is placed on job readiness training, employment and other transitional services. PCC's minimum provides inmates employment opportunities through institutional job assignments, supervised community work crews, and the community service program National Education for Assistance Dogs Services. PCC's pre-release offers employment opportunities through highly structured work release programs.

Northeastern Correctional Center (NECC)

Security Level: Minimum/Pre-Release

Location: West Concord

Operating Budget: \$10,316,351

NECC's primary mission is to prepare inmates for their transition to the community. Volunteers from the local community provide a wide variety of highly structured programs. This facility also provides residential substance abuse treatment services and employment opportunities through institutional job assignments, supervised community work crews, and the community service program National Education for Assistance Dogs Services. NECC's pre-release offers employment opportunities through highly structured work release programs.

Old Colony Correctional Center (OCCC)

Security Level: Medium/Minimum

Location: Bridgewater, Massachusetts

Operating Budget: \$40,228,844

OCCC is comprised of separate medium and minimum security facilities. OCCC medium offers a full range of academic and vocational education programs and specialized treatment services for offenders with mental illnesses. These specialized treatment services are designed to assist inmates in developing and maintaining the skills necessary to successfully assimilate in a correctional environment while preparing them for their eventual return to the community. OCCC medium provides inmates employment opportunities through institutional job assignments and a correctional industries print shop. OCCC minimum provides inmates employment opportunities through supervised community work crews.

MCI Plymouth (MCI-P)

Security Level: Minimum Security/Pre-Release

Location: Plymouth

Operating Budget: \$7,966,914

This facility is located in the Myles Standish State Forest. A primary goal of MCI-P is to provide inmates with employment opportunities through institutional job assignments, supervised community work crews and the community service program National Education for Assistance Dogs Services. This facility also offers residential substance abuse treatment services, academic and vocational education, self help and other volunteer facilitated programs.

MCI Shirley (MCI-S)

Security Level: Medium/Minimum

Location: Shirley

Operating Budget: \$51,721,623

MCI Shirley is comprised of separate medium and minimum security facilities. A 28-bed infirmary and a 13-bed assisted daily living unit is located in the medium security facility. MCI-S medium offers a full range of academic and vocational education programs and residential substance abuse treatment services. MCI-S medium provides inmates employment opportunities through institutional job assignments, correctional industries and the community service program Wheels for the World. MCI-S minimum provides inmates employment opportunities through supervised community work crews.

North Central Correctional Institution (NCCI)

Security Level: Medium/Minimum

Location: Gardner

Operating Budget: \$42,024,907

NCCI is comprised of separate medium and minimum security facilities. NCCI medium offers a full range of academic and vocational education programs, sex offender treatment and residential substance abuse treatment services. It provides inmates employment opportunities through institutional job assignments, and the community service program National Education for Assistance Dogs Services. Additional employment opportunities are offered through the state of the art correctional industries optical shop. NCCI minimum provides inmates employment opportunities through supervised community work crews.

The man wrote that he has no family in New England and his visitors travel from out of state unexpectedly whenever they are able. "The new visiting policy will eliminate this from ever happening," the man wrote.

Several people also spoke out against the use of dogs to search visitors, saying it could discourage visitors who are afraid of or allergic to dogs, and it creates a more frightening atmosphere for visitors, including children.

Caroline Bays, a Watertown town councilor who visits a friend of a friend in solitary confinement, said the vast majority of drugs are not being smuggled in by visitors. With dog searches, she said, "Visits will plummet, families will suffer and drugs will continue to make their way into prison as you focus on the wrong people."

Lemuel Shattuck Hospital Correctional Unit (LSHCU)

Security Level: Medium

Location: Jamaica Plain

Operating Budget: \$6,140,863

This correctional unit is located within the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital. The LSHCU provides inmates with quality inpatient and outpatient medical care in a safe and secure environment.

**Massachusetts Alcohol & Substance Abuse Center**

Security Level: Medium/Minimum Security

Location: Bridgewater

Operating Budget: \$10,017,820

MASAC houses two populations: criminally sentenced, minimum-security, male inmates and civilly committed males participating in an up to 30-day detoxification program who are committed to the facility under MGL 123, Section 35. MASAC provides medically monitored detoxification services, education, including the tools to affect positive change for aftercare in order to promote a healthier and more meaningful lifestyle upon reentry to the community.

Bridgewater State Hospital (BSH)

Security Level: Medium Security

Location: Bridgewater

Annual Operating Budget: \$47,558,746

This facility provides court ordered evaluations and treatment services for civilly committed adult men who by virtue of their mental illness are in need of hospitalization under conditions of strict security. BSH is one of the few institutions in the country to be accredited by the American Correctional Association, Joint Commission, and National Commission of Correctional Health Care standards.

Boston Pre-Release Center (BPRC)

Security Level: Minimum/Pre-Release

Location: Roslindale

Operating Budget: \$8,008,204

This facility was constructed in 2003 and is the Department's newest and largest pre-release facility. The primary mission of this facility is to assist inmates in securing and maintaining stable employment in preparation for their return to the community upon release through job readiness training and a highly structured work release program.

Massachusetts Treatment Center (MTC)

Security Level: Medium

Location: Bridgewater

Operating Budget: \$30,124,196

This facility provides a comprehensive treatment program for inmates identified as sex offenders or those who have been civilly committed as sexually dangerous persons. The goal of the sex offender treatment program is to provide an intensive treatment program that reduces the risks associated with re-offending.