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United for Quality Care

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Ellen Durko, RN
Department of Corrections
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations committee. My name is Ellen Durko and I am an RN at Functional Unit 10 which is Will-CYB, CRCI, and NCI.

I am here today to thank you for appropriating funds for inmate healthcare in last year's budget. Since I spoke last year our staff has seen marginal improvement in Medical staffing. However, all of our staffing concerns have not been alleviated in fact many continue to persist. We unfortunately are still being mandated frequently, which results in burnout and impacts quality of care. Furthermore, the list to see nurse practitioners and doctors are too long and we as nurses can only do so much.

The DOC has been and remains the "de facto" state-run mental health hospitals of yesteryear and "de facto" drug and alcohol detox centers. Many inmates are unable to access rehabs and ultimately end up incarcerated due to their addictions. An article in the news recently found that a high number of newly released inmates are those found deceased from opiate ODs.

We offer truly outstanding mental health care in Corrections. Our group therapy and classes are every bit on par with inpatient psych facilities and rehab facilities. Our staff is committed to helping inmates improve their lives as well as provide them with stable support when they are at their most vulnerable.

Incarceration is a time for reflection and the beginning of their healing journey from terrible childhood traumas. The majority of inmates are born into poverty, and have multiple medical and psychiatric health care needs. Until Society can come up with a better system to help those suffering we must and can fund DOC healthcare.

We know that progress is being made and are here to ask you to protect and continue to increase funding for inmate healthcare.

Thank you.