



Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee. My name is Matthew Eggen and I am a social worker in DOC. As of January, I have worked at Corrigan Radgowski Correctional Center for 8 years, I am now at Brooklyn Correctional.

Many of us sat here last year and brought you testimonials about the conditions front line DOC health services staff have been working with. We stated unequivocally that we love our jobs and are the best staff for these high stress jobs. We sit here united in front of you again stating that we are good at these jobs, despite the overwhelming stress we deal with every day. Some of the stress comes from the population we serve. Some of the stress comes from not enough resources and staff to provide the type of care everybody deserves.

Last year your committee was generous enough to not only not cut our budget, something that had happened each of my previous 8 years of service, but in the 2020-21 budget you increased it. Thank you for doing so, and we hope that you continue to see that the need for proper funding is critical in order to provide care to this challenging and underserved population.

We care about providing good quality care and despite front line staff's best efforts, we continue to struggle with the same issues of efficiency and efficacy of care. There are still crazy long waits to see providers, nurse sick calls are still routinely longer than they need to be. For example, at Corrigan we have been struggling with considerable logistical problems getting inmates routine care. There are too many reasons to highlight in these two minutes why this happens, but if we cannot see an inmate due to facility restrictions on Monday, the list of people we were to see that day doesn't get seen until the following week. This takes an enormous toll on inmates who are sick and in need of care. I want to emphasize these are not emergencies, emergencies will always get to the front of the line. But if you have a chronic issue that doesn't get resolved week after week, at some point that will become an emergency. Due to staffing cuts and chronic neglect of this aging population, staff are routinely triaging emergencies that likely could have been routine if only allowed to be seen in the normal course of business.

I sat here last year and highlighted that when an inmate has a medical issue that isn't cared for in a normal time frame, this inmate begins to write to other disciplines to attempt to get resolution of their issue. Mental health regularly fields requests from inmates who are at varying stages of frustration, anger, and bargaining to attempt resolution. This pace, as a result of years of budget neglect and mismanagement of resources, creates a dissonance that is felt every day in our work.

I restate: we want to do great work, and for the most part you have the right front line staff in the facilities to care for this population. Even when you have the right staff, when you don't have enough of them, and they are being mandated multiple times a week, week after week month after month, due to poor staffing, even the right staff struggle to provide quality care.

Please, we need more help. Please do not lower what you have already allocated for us. We care about this under-served and challenging population and we are doing the best we can. We need more staff, we really do. Thank you for your time.