



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1100

March 12, 2025

Jessica Hart Steinmann, General Counsel and Director of Litigation
Leigh Ann O'Neill, Senior Legal Strategy Attorney
Jack Casali, Associate Attorney
America First Policy Institute
1635 Roger Road
Fort Worth TX 76107

Dear Ms. Steinmann, Ms. O'Neill, and Mr. Casali:

I received your letter dated March 5, 2025, in which you express concerns regarding your belief that women are being harmed by the presence of transgender women housed in women's correctional facilities. This letter is to address your ongoing concerns.

Your letter states that female incarcerates have submitted "internal complaints at Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) outlining the various harms they have suffered and continue to suffer" at WCCW. The Washington State Department of Corrections takes every allegation of any type of aggressive behavior very seriously and investigates each incident fully, regardless of the facility in which it was alleged to occur. Furthermore, we are fully compliant with the provisions of the Prison Rape Elimination Act, to include the requirement to receive reports from outside agencies, and we report all cases of sexual assault to outside law enforcement for prosecution.

Most of the complaints you cite state that women feel "psychological distress associated with encountering male inmates at WCCW". Individuals housed at WCCW encounter male staff, male visitors, and male volunteers daily. WCCW houses transgender men, transgender women, non-binary individuals, and cis women, all of whom may have experienced some form of trauma in their background. We work to build a supportive community, reflective of our surrounding communities for all individuals housed at WCCW. The individuals housed in our facilities have the ability to seek mental health care as well as many cognitive behavioral programs to assist them in their healing and growth.

It is the Department's goal to create safe and secure communities - both inside WCCW and in the open community. It is important to note there are multiple studies showing transgender people are at risk; transgender women are significantly more likely to be victimized when housed in male facilities. It is the Department's commitment to the safety of everyone in its custody that informs our policies and practices regarding transgender women and gender-affirming housing. Decisions to move individuals from one gendered facility to another are never made without the lengthy and intense scrutiny of a multidisciplinary committee. This scrutiny continues after an individual is transferred to ensure the housing decision remains appropriate.

"Working Together for SAFE Communities"

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The State of Washington will continue to operate under state law and the Prison Rape Elimination Act standards regarding decision making about how we house and provide care to transgender individuals in our custody.

We appreciate your letter and the opportunity to respond to your concerns; it is important to our incarcerated individuals to have advocates and support from the community.

Sincerely,



Charlotte Headley, Superintendent
Washington Corrections Center for Women

cc: Tim Lang, Secretary
Sean Murphy, Deputy Secretary
Melissa Andrewjeski, Assistant Secretary, Women's Prison Division
Deborah Wofford, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Women's Prison Division