



December 10, 2014

Attention: Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on JPS
State Legislative Building
16 West Jones Street Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Representative,

We thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. NC-CURE, (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errant's), is a grassroots, nonprofit organization, incorporated in North Carolina. We are membership driven and operate solely with a volunteer staff. We work to bring awareness to the issues that impact people involved in the criminal justice system and advocate for positive reform and effective policies. NC-CURE is not a service organization; we work to educate and provide the resources our members need to become proactive advocates for change.

Through our work with prisoners, their family members and correctional staff, we believe we have a unique perspective and insight into the impact the criminal justice system has on the offender population and their family members. Due to these relationships, we are kept apprised of certain abusive patterns of behavior within the prison system. The most reprehensible complaints we receive are those that concern the physical and mental abuse of people incarcerated in North Carolina. However, the most disturbing reports we encounter, describe the inhumane and blatant disregard for the mentally ill inmates.

Over the last six years our reform efforts have focused on the treatment (or lack of) for the seriously mentally ill (SMI). We continue to advocate for compliance with Federal regulations under the ADA (the Americans with Disability Act). The ADA was revised and adopted (in 2011) for the protection of "qualified disabled" prisoners.

In 2009, NC-CURE began working with Senator Eleanor Kinnaird and Governor Purdew's Senior Legal Counsel, Mr. Mark Davis, regarding the treatment of people incarcerated with disabilities. NC-CURE advocates continued to meet with the Governor's staff and DOC leadership, for three consecutive years, to bring awareness to serious issues impacting people incarcerated with disabilities. In 2010, NC-CURE began working with the U.S Department of Justice in a coordinated effort. NC-CURE advocates began mailing disabled prisoners ADA Title II complaint forms for submission to the DOJ. In December of 2012, the DOJ, Special litigation Section, met with NCDOC Secretary Jennie Lancaster and by 2013, NC DPS, adopted a revised ADA policy including special accommodation for disabled prisoners. It is important you recognize that effective policies serve no purpose when they are not enforced.

We recognize that many of the complaints we receive from prisoners came directly after the passing of the Inmate Medical Cost Containment Bill. Several months later and thru today, we remain inundated with medical complaint from prisoners and family members. The majority of complaints concerned the discontinuation of psychotropic and life sustaining medications, denial of diagnostic testing and surgeries ordered by outside specialists.

In 2012, we began receiving calls from people released and their families regarding the lack of coordinated efforts for after care support and resources for offenders in need of mental health treatment and co-occurring disorders (this population is grossly underserved).

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"The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons"

Fyodor Dostoyevsky



In an attempt to assist the needs of offenders returning home, we discovered that programs such as TASC (Treatment for Effective Community Services), had limiting criteria preventing certain felony offenders from qualifying for assistance. The over used phrase, "Evidence Based Practices" falls short, when the protocols used eliminate our most at risk offenders from obtaining mental health and/or co-occurring treatment. In our opinion, this is a set up for failure. Equally troublesome, is mentally ill offender returning home, with undeniable judicial collateral baggage that they are now burdened with. The SMI, already face a myriad of challenges coping and managing their mental illness and its stigma, combined with a criminal record for life just further debilitates their chance for any success in society.

We are hopeful that you will continue to recognize issues identified by NC-CURE advocates, who speak for those without a public platform (prisoners) and the families we work with. We are concerned, that if these gross discrepancies are not effectively addressed, we will ultimately suffer consequences that will have a long term negative impact on recidivism and public safety.

Sincerely,

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