

June 12, 2023

Norfolk Inmate Council
Executive Board
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Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC)

Culture of Punishment & Corruption

The Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) continue to waste tax payer dollars with a budget of \$730,000,000 or about \$130,000 per prisoner to hold in custody a year, that is almost tripla from 10 years ago.

The Norfolk Inmate Council (NIC) on March 9, 2023 through Prison Legal Services (PLS) sent an email letter to Governor Healey, RE: Request for Emergency Intervention. Since this time PLS has assurances that an investigation has been started. However here has been some situations which the NIC knows of from our various sources which contradict any such progress.

On April 4, 2023 three officers at MCI-Norfolk have been relieved of their duties or resigned from the DOC. April 4, 2023 IPS Officer Christopher R. Vargas was escorted from MCI-Norfolk after "tipping off" other officers of an impending investigation due to introduction of contraband (Substances). The other officers believed to be involved are Nathan L. Antunes and Neury Baez Gonzalez accused of introduction and Officer Vargas tipped them off that they were preparing to be walked off the premises. Gonzalez is reported to have immediately left his post exited the prison, turned over his ID, keys etc and quit. Antunes was later walked off then Vargas. However prisoners continue to be punished for Substance Use Disorder (SUD's). The MAT program started about a week or two ago, yet fines fees and sanctions for said addiction remain in place.

The same class (1/16/22) Vincent P. Rafferty while on vacation and traveling through Michigan was drunk driving and killed himself and a 9 year old girl and her father in a head on collision. This occurred when Rafferty was heading in the wrong direction into oncoming traffic.

James Keown suffering from a neurological health condition housed in the medical unit at MCI-Norfolk at the time of the letter Governor Healey has been transferred to MCI-Shirley medical unit for an alleged higher standard of care. However just the day before his being transferred to Shirley medium prison hospital was denied a medical parole based on the fact the DOC claimed he was faking his ailments. However the next day he was transferred for a higher level of care. Was the DOC lawyers making false claims to the court on behalf of a corrupt prison system or was James transferred out of retaliation? It is clearly one or the other. He is in failing health and requires more care contrary to DOC claims to the court or the DOC transferred him for becoming the NIC's Policy Advocate and key connection to PLS, in the letter noted above to Governor Healey.

PLS clearly understands this as retaliation and has begun to make efforts to work closer with the NIC and advocate for James.

For some reason the DOC and politicians continue to protect and keep in place the MA Department of Correction (DOC) officials. It does not end there either. After the recent assault on an officer at Shirley much in the press the Union Official noted that they need more staff (1,000). However failure by administrators are much more clear in this. When the DOC held about 12,000 prisoners staff to prisoner ratio was 2.5 prisoners to every 1 staff member. Today that ratio is 1.3 prisoners to every staff member. However the DOC continues to make false claims about health care, staffing and overall corruption running unchecked in the MA-DOC. Minimum and Pre-Release facilities remain only half full, which are cheaper to operate and greatly enhances the chance of a successful reentry.

The NIC would like to clearly put forth that the DOC has the NIC in the cross hairs at this time. A tentatively scheduled review of the NIC and all it's committees is scheduled with program officials for June 16, 2023 at which time officials from DOC Central Office require presentations," For clarification, there will be an opportunity for various groups and committees that have historically been established under the N.I.C. and are currently observed in accordance with 103 DOC 473 to conduct a five minute verbal summary outlining the goals and objectives of proposed groups." This timing can only be construed as a means to attempt to shut down the NIC. Let's remember for a moment that the NIC has been recognized in several court decisions. Additionally the NIC's Constitution was signed 50 years ago with several legislators present and reported on in the Boston Globe, July 23, 1973.

This is a State sponsored institution (MA-DOC) if this was a private organization it would be charged with the RICO statue. Simply put: Several officers and officials within the DOC are working together to introduce illegal contraband into the prison resulting in charges in court. Officers are working in concert to accomplish this. These officers pay dues to a Union to protect them right or wrong and the DOC Central office covers up the actions of these criminal actors in an effort to further their own interests and financial and career benefits. This can include promotions which grant higher pay. More power and better benefits. This was all explained in the letter to Governor Healey.

The fact is the tax payers are all footing the bills for various charges: Contraband Smuggling, Theft, Overtime Abuse, Sexual Misconduct, Death, Assaults, Weapons Charges. The Governor's Office has turned a blind eye to this it seems. Public Safety (EOPSS) in concert with the DOC continues it's course of a culture of punishment.

The current NIC has taken the stance that we are elected and work for the prisoners regardless of race, religion or sexuality. Now today the NIC is on the brink of a possible end due to bringing the original spirit of the NIC back and there is not a politician or official brave enough to get their hands dirty and clean up the DOC. This is pretty obvious since when politicians and officials come to MCI-Norfolk they seldom if ever meet with the NIC.

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