



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**  
P.O. Box 41100 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1110

October 27, 2021

Joanna Carns  
Office of Corrections Ombuds  
2700 Evergreen Parkway NW  
Olympia, WA 98505

Dear Ms. Carns:

The Washington Department of Corrections appreciates the value of the Office of the Corrections Ombuds, a resource within the Governor's Office, to prompt systemic change, better correctional practices and further the voice of incarcerated individuals and their loved ones.

As seen on page 9 of this year's Ombuds annual report, the department is pleased to see many of the complaints submitted to the Office of Corrections Ombuds have been resolved through active engagement with those in the department's care and custody as well as support from your office. The department is committed to improving its practices to create a safer and more humane correctional agency.

Within calendar year 2021, the department has continued advancing its efforts on crucial operational issues, to include the issues outlined within the 2021 Ombuds' Annual Report. Among the accomplishments and strides made is the creation of a Women's Prison Division, led by newly named Assistant Secretary Jeannie Darneille and reporting directly to the deputy secretary. This new division will focus on female gender responsive programming and services that will better inform the way the department addresses the unique needs of the female incarcerated population and better prepares them for a more successful reentry. In addition, I believe this will pay great dividends as we move into gender responsive services in general.

I am excited that the department had two progressive policy proposals focused on less restrictive settings – graduated reentry and a coaching and mentoring model of community supervision, both of which were endorsed by the Washington Legislature, resulting in funding and statutory changes. Both efforts focus on community-based justice efforts, aimed at decreasing institutional time and reducing jail or prison-based violation sanctions. The graduated reentry expansion creates eligibility for individuals to serve a select period of their sentence under electronic home monitoring with enhanced services supports, housing vouchers and community navigators. The program was previously funded to serve less than 200 individuals, and the expansion will now allow more than 1000 per year. Funding and direction were provided to decrease caseloads and train officers to develop individual case plans and more robustly support those who are most high risk.

The Washington State Department of Corrections is expanding transfers to graduated reentry and electronic home monitoring, following the direction from the Legislature. The department recently increased the time during which incarcerated individuals are eligible for promotion to minimum-2 custody, expanding it from four years until release to six years. Both actions follow the principle of housing individuals in the least restrictive environment necessary and providing more normalization while providing for transition back into the community.

The department has formalized the end of disciplinary segregation within the state's correctional system. We know and recognize that data demonstrates that disciplinary segregation has not been proven as an effective sanction of deterrent to negative behavior.

Additionally, I have established and named the first director of person-centered services, a new position, designed to provide the viewpoint of a person with lived experience who can help bring about the needed changes to move to human centered design in its services, and this position will provide valuable contributions to the department including involvement in the review and creation on DOC policies and practices.

As the new secretary of the Washington Department of Corrections, I recognize the complexities of this work and celebrate that we have come a long way in many areas but equally recognize that we have much further to go.

The Office of the Corrections Ombuds has helped to highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of incarcerated individuals. The department hopes, through its supplemental funding requests, to continue its work with Amend on transforming rehabilitative work and correctional culture within the state's correctional system. Funding was also requested to support shorter stays in restrictive housing and capital resources to provide additional physical capacity and staff resources for increased access to mental health and psychiatric care to those in its care and custody. Finally, there is a significant financial request to support a comprehensive approach to healthcare delivery for those in the care and custody of the department, which is an area highlighted in your 2021 annual report and the ongoing work we have accomplished with the Office of the Corrections Ombuds.

The department remains dedicated to provide quality care and services to those entrusted to the state's custody. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Ombuds Office as we work together for safer communities benefitting all Washingtonians.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Strange,  
Secretary

cc: Sonja Hallum, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor  
Sean Murphy, Deputy Secretary  
Julie Martin, Chief of Staff  
Mike Obenland, Assistant Secretary  
Sara Kariko, Chief Medical Officer  
Scott Russell, Interim Assistant Secretary  
Karie Rainer, Mental Health Director  
Melena Thompson, Executive Policy Office Director  
Deborah "Jo" Wofford, Gender Responsive Administrator  
Jeremy Barclay, Engagement & Outreach Director