

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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Opening Statement Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney

Hearing on BOP Management of its Female Inmate Population November 28, 2018

I want to thank the Chairman for calling today's hearing to discuss the troubling gaps in care for female inmates in our country and much needed reform to our country's prison system.

Director Hurwitz and Inspector General Horowitz, I appreciate you taking the time to be here today to address these important issues.

Mr. Horowitz, the report you issued in September was troubling. It exposed serious gaps in treatment and services for women in prison. Your office has been highlighting problems in federal and private prisons for years, and I applaud your commitment to pushing our government to do better.

The Obama Administration strengthened policies for managing and treating female inmates in 2016, when the Bureau of Prisons issued the Female Offender Manual.

The new report Mr. Horowitz released, however, documents how the Trump Administration is not fully implementing these new policies.

The Inspector General's report finds that only 3% of female inmates are provided treatment for trauma even though at least 90% of incarcerated women report suffering trauma.

Women who want help are left to wait months or years for even basic access to trauma related treatment—if they receive it at all—because there is only one staff person assigned to each facility to implement the trauma program.

The Inspector General also finds that the Bureau of Prisons is not providing new mothers with access to programs that would allow them to spend essential time bonding with their infants.

The Inspector General also finds that access to feminine hygiene products inconsistent and inadequate. Some inmates were provided a uniform number of products, and when they asked permission to get more, they were denied this basic sanitary necessity.

That is simply not acceptable.

Strained resources at the Bureau of Prisons has been exacerbated by President Trump's hiring freeze and budget cuts. Over the past year, the Bureau of Prisons has cut thousands of staffing positions.

Director Hurwitz, I appreciate your commitment to implementing the Inspector General's recommendations.

But I know that for you to be able to correct the management challenges you are facing, you need adequate resources. Those resources should be used effectively and efficiently—not simply on outsourcing to contractors with little oversight or accountability.

I am deeply concerned by the sudden reversal by former Attorney General Sessions of the Obama Administration's decision to phase out private prisons.

The Obama Administration made this decision after reports, including one by Mr. Horowitz, exposed dangerous health and public safety issues with private prisons.

Yet, without any evidence of improved conditions or accountability, the Trump Administration decided to put taxpayers back on the hook for an unsafe and broken system of private prisons.

In recent months, various Trump Administration officials have voiced their support for investing resources into criminal justice reform.

I hope we can work on a bipartisan basis to enact meaningful criminal justice reforms to truly reduce unnecessary mass incarceration.

I want to note in closing that Members on the Democratic side are juggling a lot of organizational meetings and votes today.

We will do our best, but please do not take our scheduling conflicts with the timing of this hearing as any indication of our commitment to this issue.

We care deeply about the topic of today's hearing and will continue to work on this and other prison reform and criminal justice issues.

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