

March 16, 2017

David Harlow
Acting Director US Marshals Service
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Washington, DC 20001
United States

Charlie Baker
Governor of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor
Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Maura Healy
Attorney General of Massachusetts
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108-1518

Dear Mr. Harlow, Mr. Baker, and Ms. Healy:

I [wrote to you](#) last month reporting human rights violations here at the Plymouth County Correctional Facility (PCCF,) overseen by Sheriff Joseph D. McDonald Jr. I left it to you to answer my concerns "not by mere words, but my your much louder actions and/or inactions."

Unfortunately, I received no response and it is now my sad duty to relay news of five subsequent suicide attempts and at least one death at this institution.

First, federal arrestee [William Lufkin](#), whose friends and family called him Billy, hung himself in the isolation unit. He died the day after the US Marshals dropped him off, a mere five days after [my last open letter](#). He was 26. Curiously, and concerning too, his death seems not to have been reported by either PCCF or federal authorities left over from the previous administration.

Around the same time, in the same unit, disabled Afghanistan war veteran Joshua L. Daniels also tried to "hang it up." Due to what I can only describe as callous negligence and/or reckless disregard for both human life as well as Joshua's sacred service to our country, the 24-year-old father of two was placed in segregation despite his PTSD diagnosis and previous suicide attempt in this very same facility. As the [dangers and human rights concerns](#) surrounding solitary confinement of the mentally ill are well-recognized, and further it is widely known that many of our warriors return home bearing wounds that don't show on the surface, this tragically predictable result shouldn't have surprised any of the state-licensed mental health staff here.



DINA RUDICK/GLOBE STAFF

Plymouth County Correctional Facility (PCCF,) operates under the purview of Sheriff Joseph D. McDonald Jr., pictured above.

Though he survived, Joshua is by no means out of the woods. He has now been moved to [the infamous](#) Bridgewater State Mental Institution, where it seems a foregone conclusion that his record of service and desperate need for help are being met with apathy and disrespect for our obligations to our veterans. Without the actual care heroes like Mr. Daniels deserve from our state, I fear he will eventually succeed in ending his own life.

I hope by now I have made it obvious that I expect much better from my native Massachusetts, our leaders, and our licensed mental health professionals. Given that Justina Pelletier [was maimed](#) and [many other children](#) have already been hurt by unwanted and unneeded psychological care forced on them by our state, it would be a tragic irony for Joshua to die having been deprived by our commonwealth of the psychological help that could save his life. We owe those that choose to serve our nation only the best, and when they have trouble readjusting to civilian life due to battlefield trauma they deserve appropriate treatment and most certainly not to slip through the cracks in our justice system.

I'm disturbed by the number of veterans I've encountered here. Joshua is one of three combat rescue personnel I've had the honor of meeting since my arrival on February 4th, and there are many others with different specialties. Why aren't we ensuring they all get the help they need instead of felony convictions that mark them for life? Does there service really mean so little to us and our elected officials here in Massachusetts?



JOSHUA DANIELS/FACEBOOK

Specialist Joshua L. Daniels was incarcerated by the state of Massachusetts and Plymouth County Correctional Facility (PCCF,) where he twice attempted suicide rather than ask for help and risk ending up in PCCF's notoriously punitive "Q5" suicide watch unit.

Additionally, our veterans are not alone here at Plymouth County Correctional Facility. While I was working to draft this letter, another individual, a Mr. Des., slit his wrist under his bed covers no more than 35 feet away from me. Thankfully, he was discovered before he lost too much blood and was alive when staff wheeled him out.

I am unsure of the identities in the other two recent suicide attempts.

From my experience, it is readily apparent the main problem is the unjustifiably punitive approach taken for mental health here. As you may recall, my previous letter detailed "Q5," a form of torture that masquerades as an emergency mental health intervention at PCCF. People who ask for physiological are placed in approximately 40 degree Fahrenheit "Q5" solitary cells. Most have a bare tile floor and one features a hole in the ground victims must use to defecate instead of a toilet. People are locked in these cells alone, naked or nearly naked, and usually with neither a mattress nor blanket. The temperatures are so cold that skin turns purple, inmates

can see their breath, and people find themselves literally frozen to the floor.

While a minority of the survivors I've met were put in "Q5" after seeking mental health assistance, the majority of them do not suffer from mental illness. Instead, they report being put there as a form of extra judicial punishment by dishonest guards. Specifically regarding "Q5," one staff member rhetorically asked a group of us "you think we don't makeup stories?" Having now encountered sadistic and belligerent staff like D. Fernandez and P. Donnelly, it is crystal clear to me that such horrible human rights abuses run rampant and unchallenged by the doctors and upper management here. I even saw medical staff threaten the elderly man who first applied pressure to stop Mr. Des.'s bleeding with "Q5" because he flashed his prisoner ID too quickly.

Indeed, about one third of the inmates I interview have been "Q5'ed," and some have been there a dozen times or more. I recently mailed ten complaints on behalf of eight different survivors to the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, which has already informed me it has decided to abdicate it's duties, as it did in the Pelletier case, rather than investigate.

This dereliction is disastrous for all the inmates here, but especially for those who, like Mr. Daniels, need psychiatric treatment and belong in therapy instead of prison. As it stands, when they seek such assistance they instead find themselves forced into isolation in "Q5" for 24+ hours before they are asked if they still need help. They are held there until they answer "no." Under such circumstances, it isn't hard to conclude why people don't come forward, and it shouldn't be surprising there are [a lot](#) of suicides here. I believe "Q5" and similar practices across Massachusetts are the primary cause of our state's [extraordinarily high prison suicide rate](#) — about twice the national average.

Let me reiterate now--there is no way I would ever seek help here.

So, I am once again left to ask questions of the utmost urgency.

How many families must lose a son, grandson, nephew, father, or grandfather to this place and these abhorrent practices before action is taken? I hope none.

Are the Massachusetts Board of Registration and Medicine and Department of Mental Health mere rubber stamps? I hope not.

How much time will go by before the governor's office and attorney general address these human rights violations and their tragic consequences? I hope not long.

Best Regards,
Martin "[MartyG](#)" Gottesfeld
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CC: Joan Mikula, Commissioner, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Mental Health
Candace Lapidus Sloane, M.D., Chair, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Registration and Medicine
Beth McLaughlin, Chief of Staff/General Counsel, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Safety
Daniel Bennett, Secretary, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)
Massachusetts Bar Association