

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 2, 2013

The Honorable Charles E. Samuels, Jr.
Director
Federal Bureau of Prisons
320 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20534

Dear Director Samuels:

We are concerned with the recently announced mission change of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to transfer more than a thousand female inmates from the Federal Correctional Institute in Danbury, Connecticut to a new facility in Aliceville, Alabama beginning this month. This plan will permanently convert over 1100 female beds to male, which will mean there are no longer any federal prison beds for women in the Northeast region of the United States. This transfer would dramatically disrupt the lives of these female inmates, many of whom are from the Northeast, and place them out of reach of their families and loved ones.

According to a New York Times editorial from June 23, 2012, this transfer was justified by your office because facilities for women were 55 percent over capacity. While we are aware that the Aliceville facility was always intended to be a women's facility, it has come to our attention that the competing priority of creating additional space for lower security *male inmates* is in fact the impetus for transferring the majority of Danbury's female inmates to Alabama. We are troubled by that justification and would like additional information to better understand why the Danbury facility has been selected for this change.

Research shows that being housed far from home without the support of family harms inmates while they are incarcerated and makes their reentry into society more difficult. According to the National Women's Law Center, more than half of female inmates have children under the age of 18. We were pleased to see the efforts of the BOP and the Department of Justice to encourage inmates to stay connected to their families, especially their children, through the new Children of Incarcerated Parents program launched in June. A memo you distributed to all federal inmates on June 19 reinforced that message and encouraged inmates to have visits with their children because "there is no substitute for seeing your children, looking them in the eye, and letting them know you care about them." The decision to shift the female inmates from Danbury to Aliceville and eliminate all female prison beds in the Northeast seems to contradict the spirit and undermine the impact of this commitment.

We understand that the small percentage of women inmates in the federal system means that many women will be incarcerated very far from home. Given BOP's commitment to maintaining family contact, the goal should be to have as many inmates as close as possible to their home. The Federal Corrections Institute at Danbury is uniquely well-situated to do just that. It is located along a densely populated urban corridor and a significant number of the inmates are from the surrounding states. Danbury is only 60 miles from Hartford, 70 miles from New York City, and 150 miles from Boston. It is easily accessible by public transportation, train, and car. In contrast, Aliceville is over 1000 miles away from each of these cities. It has no airport, train or other forms of long-distance public transportation. Cab rides from airports, as well as the need for overnight housing and the extensive travel time required to get to Aliceville, make visits impossible for many families.


We respectfully request answers to the below questions so that we can understand the rationale behind this dramatic change in the mission of the Danbury facility and the impact it will have on women and families from our states.

- Given the unique proximity of the Danbury facility to major Northeastern cities, why was it selected to be converted into a facility for men? And what facilities in the Northeast will be available for women currently at the security level housed at Danbury?
- What are the home residences for the women currently housed at Danbury, broken down by city and state?
- What percentage of the female inmates at Danbury have children under the age of 18?
- Why was the Danbury facility selected to be converted into a facility for men, given that Aliceville was explained as needed to respond to overcrowding of women's prisons?
- How much will it cost to "convert" Danbury to a men's facility? What different kinds of programs, activities, and facilities will be provided? What will happen to the current equipment or other items used by women?
- Since some BOP policies suggest that family visits are one factor included when inmates are considered for transfer to less secure facilities, what role will visitation history play in the transfer of inmates from Danbury to Aliceville?
- Given the 1997 BOP program statement on meeting the needs of women prisoners, and the June 19, 2013 memo committing resources and support to parenting and to "helping you prepare to reenter society," what steps is the BOP taking to ensure women inmates transferred from Danbury to Aliceville continue to have contact with their families and are prepared for reentry, including the following:
 - Cost of communication (e.g., phone calls, packages)?
 - Cost of transportation to Aliceville?
 - Access to lawyers from their home districts to support keeping custody of children, dealing with migration issues, or questions on convictions and sentencing?
 - Access to education and reentry programs?
 - Access to work opportunities?
 - Access to residential drug and alcohol treatment programs similar to the ones currently offered at Danbury?
- What will be the total cost of transferring female inmates to Aliceville from Danbury and moving male inmates into Danbury?
- What information did you provide to Congress and when regarding this transfer project?

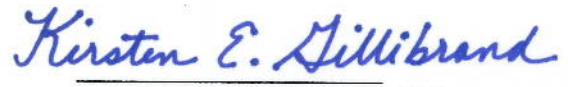
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Until these questions are answered, we request that the Bureau of Prisons suspend its plan to transfer the women inmates from Danbury to Aliceville. These are important concerns that should be properly addressed before any plan is pursued. We look forward to your prompt response.


Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER MURPHY
United States Senator




KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND
United States Senator



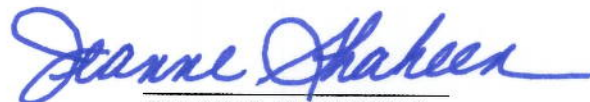
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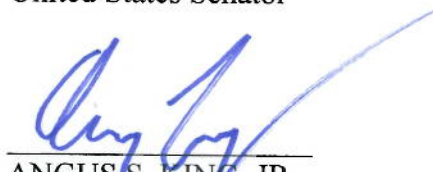
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