



PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTIONAL LAW PROJECT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2020

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Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project Files Lawsuit Against the PA Department of Corrections for Denying Transgender Medical Care and Disclosing Client's Gender Identity to Other Prisoners Without Consent.

ERIE, PA – The Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP) filed a lawsuit against the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) on behalf of Sam Doe (they/them), a non-binary person incarcerated at the State Correctional Institution at Cambridge Springs, one of two women's state prisons in Pennsylvania. Doe has been denied necessary medical care, including access to a doctor specializing in transgender health and gender affirming surgery, in violation of the Eighth Amendment.

Despite numerous requests, Doe has been denied vital medical care endorsed by the [World Professional Association for Transgender Health's](#) Standards of Care. Due to the lack of on-site medical expertise for treating transgender and non-binary individuals, Doe has been required to repeatedly educate the medical staff on these nationally recognized guidelines. The failure of the PA DOC to provide consistent hormone therapy, necessary transition care, and accommodations for Doe's safety and social transition lead to a serious act of self-harm.

Doe has been unable to obtain further essential medical care as PA DOC policy requires that treatment decisions can only be authorized by a state-wide administrative committee, located a five hour drive from Cambridge Springs in Mechanicsburg, PA. This committee does not include any medical professionals directly involved in Doe's care.

“Rather than providing Doe with access to knowledgeable specialists, and training the on-site providers for this crucial and life-saving medical need, PA DOC has decided to single out transgender healthcare for a lengthy administrative process that disregards medical judgement,” said Alexandra Morgan-Kurtz, PILP Managing Attorney, “Healthcare should not be decided by an administrative committee.”

In addition to advocating for medical care, PILP seeks to ensure that Doe has access to safe housing and to other necessary accommodations. Previously, PA DOC staff severely jeopardized Doe's safety when they revealed Doe's gender identity and history of self-harm. This instigated harassment and threats of violence causing Doe to fear even walking to meals alone. To this day, Doe continues to experience severe psychological distress as a result of being outed without their consent and PA DOC's refusal to provide them with adequate medical care.



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“Prisons have a duty to provide essential medical care and safe accommodations to all incarcerated people, regardless of gender identity. Unfortunately, the PA Department of Corrections and its staff’s bureaucratic hurdles and severe violations of privacy have led to physical and mental harm and caused unnecessary suffering,” stated PILP Interim Executive Director Su Ming Yeh.

The Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project is representing Sam Doe in the case *Doe v. Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, et al.*, 1:20-cv-0023 (W.D. Pa.).

More information is available at pailp.org/news

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