

*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

Trial in Class Action Challenge to Discrimination Against Incarcerated Women in Berks County Jail Begins Tuesday in Philadelphia

November 8, 2019

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The trial in a groundbreaking case challenging discriminatory treatment of women incarcerated in the Berks County Jail, based solely on their gender, begins Tuesday in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The plaintiffs are challenging Berks County's policy and practice of providing the lowest-security men in its custody with significantly greater freedoms and privileges than women with the same classification.

Victory, et al. v. Berks County is a class action lawsuit challenging the practice of imprisoning women with the "Trusty" classification in jail cells while housing men with the same classification in a separate "reentry center." There, the men enjoy far more time out of their cells, greater access to privileges, better visitation conditions, and easier access to furloughs. Plaintiffs Theresa Victory (now Theresa Bohning), Alice Velazquez-Diaz, and a class consisting of all current and future female Trusty prisoners in the Berks County Jail are represented by The Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project and Dechert LLP.

The prisoners' rights organization and co-counsel contend that providing only men with greater freedoms and less restrictive conditions of confinement, and not women with the same classification, violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. They seek a permanent injunction ordering Berks County to treat women equally to similarly situated men.

The case is important because it may decide to what extent prisons and jails need to provide equal housing and access to rehabilitative opportunities to incarcerated women. Women are the most rapidly expanding population in the U.S. prison system yet historically, prisons and jails have often provided inadequate and subpar housing facilities, medical care, and other necessities for incarcerated women.

WHAT: Trial in *Victory v. Berks County*

WHEN: Tuesday, November 12, 9 a.m. The trial is expected to last four days.

WHERE: James A. Byrne U.S. Courthouse, 601 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, Courtroom 6B

WHO: U.S. District Court Judge Mark A. Kearney will preside over the trial. The Plaintiffs are represented by lawyers from the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project and the law firm of Dechert LLP. Defendants are represented by The MacMain Law Group.

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