

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

JANIAH MONROE, MARILYN)
MELENDEZ, LYDIA HELÉNA VISION,)
SORA KUYKENDALL, and SASHA)
REED,)

Plaintiffs,)

v.)

Civil No. 3:18-cv-00156-NJR-MAB

JOHN BALDWIN, STEVE MEEKS, and)
MELVIN HINTON,)

Defendants.)

DECLARATION OF JANIAH MONROE

I, Janiah Monroe, hereby state:

1. I am a 29-year-old woman from the South Side of Chicago. From a young age, I knew that I was a girl. However, my family was not supportive of my gender identity. My father was especially hostile toward me after I told him that I am a girl. Around the time I was 12 years old, I began dressing as a girl and began taking hormones.

2. I entered the custody of the Illinois Department of Corrections (“IDOC”) in 2008. During my intake at the Northern Reception and Classification Center, I told prison officials that I am transgender and needed hormone therapy. Before entering IDOC custody, I had been taking hormones when I was able to get them. I knew how important it was to continue taking them. But I was not evaluated for gender dysphoria and was not prescribed hormones. Instead, IDOC repeatedly delayed providing me any treatment for gender dysphoria, even though I was extremely depressed and suicidal because I was unable to get any treatment. For years, IDOC mental health professionals repeatedly evaluated me and reconfirmed my diagnosis of gender dysphoria. They

also recommended that I start hormone therapy, but their recommendations were ignored or overruled by IDOC.

3. Instead of being treated, I was forced to wait. I submitted my first of many grievances relating to being denied treatment for gender dysphoria in February of 2010 while incarcerated at Pontiac Correctional Facility. In that grievance, I complained that I had been denied medical attention for my gender dysphoria. I specifically requested hormone therapy and gender affirming surgery. I also recounted times when I had harmed myself physically because of my gender dysphoria. IDOC denied my grievance.

4. I continued to experience increased distress relating to my gender dysphoria. I have tried to cut off my genitals several times, beginning in 2010. I explained to IDOC medical staff the reason why I was doing this: I was trying to cut off my genitals because of the deep disgust I felt for that part of my body, as well as to cut off the flow of testosterone. Each time I tried and failed to perform surgery on myself, IDOC medical staff stitched my genitals back together. On more than one occasion, I pulled out the stitches and refused to take antibiotics, hoping that my genitalia would get infected need to be amputated. I was put in restraints and told that IDOC would not amputate my genitalia.

5. I have also tried to kill myself many times, including in the past year. In August 2018, I tried to kill myself by not eating or drinking. I eventually blacked out and was taken to the hospital. Other times, I tried to hang myself or chew through my arm. I often feel that I would rather be dead than continue living with this body.

6. In November 2011, I was evaluated by a psychiatrist named Dr. Matthews, and he confirmed that I met the DSM criteria for gender dysphoria. However, I was not given hormone therapy at that time.

7. Although I finally began receiving hormone therapy sometime in mid-2012, I do not believe IDOC is giving me the correct hormones or dosage. I have not seen much change in my body since starting hormone therapy. I also do not believe IDOC is correctly monitoring my hormone levels. I rarely have bloodwork done and IDOC has refused most of my requests for increased hormone dosages. I continue to feel very anxious, depressed, and hopeless due to my body.

8. IDOC also refused for several years to give me a bra and women's underwear, although they recently finally gave me a bra after I continued to file grievances. I have also requested and been denied a safe and effective way to remove my face and body hair: my request for electrolysis hair removal was denied and I was given limited access to "Magic Shave," a chemical hair removal cream. The Magic Shave burns my skin and I cannot use it regularly to remove my body hair. The hair on my face and body make me feel terrible.

9. I continued to file grievances, including in December 2012 and February of 2013, requesting, among other things, gender affirming surgery and gender-appropriate clothing and cosmetic items. These grievances were denied. The only reasons IDOC provided were that I had no medical need for a bra or female cosmetic items, and that I was "not a candidate for a reassignment surgery," without further explanation. I have continued to grieve these issues, and while IDOC finally provided me a bra it has continued to deny my requests for gender affirming surgery.

10. In addition to the distress I feel related to gender dysphoria, I have also had to cope with constant harassment and abuse. IDOC staff, including medical staff, and other prisoners often refer to me by male pronouns and a male name. I have also been searched by male guards, even though I am a woman. I have been sexually harassed on a regular basis, and have been assaulted,

by other prisoners and IDOC personnel, because I am a woman with a feminine way of looking and expressing myself. I have filed a complaint under the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) relating to one of these incidents, in which an IDOC officer forced me to perform oral sex on him. Because of the PREA complaint, I experienced retaliation, including removal of my phone privileges and a restriction on my visitors.

11. I requested a transfer to a female facility in January 2017 and again in May 2017. In the January 2017 grievance, I described the sexual assault by the officer mentioned above. That grievance was ignored - IDOC stated that my PREA complaint was being investigated by state police and that “[d]iscipline of staff is an administrative decision.” My May 2017 grievance for gender affirming surgery and transfer to a female facility was also denied. IDOC denied me reassignment surgery because “there is no policy in place” at IDOC to provide surgery, and my transfer to a female facility was denied because reassignment surgery had not been performed.

12. Because IDOC has not given me the treatment I need, my gender dysphoria has gotten worse. I feel depressed, hopeless, and suicidal. I do not have access to professional counseling specific to transgender issues and gender dysphoria at the prison. I think about hurting myself or killing myself every day. I feel hopeless and empty because I am not allowed to be the woman I know I am. I am not “at home” in my body; it does not match who I know myself to be. I do not feel I can continue living without the treatment I need for gender dysphoria.

13. On April 1, 2019, I was transferred to an IDOC female facility. At Logan Correctional Center, I hope to be subject to less violence and harassment, and to have the opportunity to live more consistently with my gender identity. But I still have not been evaluated for gender-affirming surgery, and my medical care has not otherwise changed. Unless IDOC provides me with the medical treatment I need for my gender dysphoria, I will continue to suffer.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated: 5/2/2019

/s/ Janiah Monroe
Janiah Monroe