

**REQUEST FOR INTERVENTION TO SAVE JANIAH MONROE  
FROM EXTREME SUFFERING OR LOSS OF LIFE**

November 4, 2019

**Via Email and U.S. Mail**

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker, Governor  
The Honorable Juliana Stratton, Lt. Governor  
Office of the Governor  
James R. Thompson Center  
100 W. Randolph, 16-100  
Chicago, IL 60601

**Re: Mistreatment of Janiah Monroe by IDOC**

Dear Governor Pritzker and Lt. Governor Stratton:

We write to urge you immediately to require the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to end the extended and unnecessary segregation of Janiah Monroe, a Black transgender woman, and to provide Ms. Monroe with the surgery she desperately needs. Ms. Monroe has had to fight for years to get IDOC to recognize her as a woman—for even the most basic medical care and for transfer to a female prison. Even now, her fight continues, as IDOC continues to discriminate against Ms. Monroe by isolating her at Logan Correctional Center and denying her surgery. If IDOC does not immediately reverse its course and provide Ms. Monroe with the human interaction and medical care she needs, she is very likely to die. Indeed, she attempted to take her life on October 6, 2019.

Ms. Monroe struggled for years to start hormone therapy in IDOC. Prior to receiving hormones, Ms. Monroe attempted to remove her own genitals to stop the flow of testosterone into her body. Although IDOC finally provided her with hormones and transferred her to a women's prison after she filed suit due to her repeated sexual assaults in male prisons, these partial measures are not enough. Ms. Monroe has made several attempts to take her own life because she cannot bear to continue living in the “wrong” body. Despite this, IDOC refuses to even have her evaluated for gender-affirming surgery.

In addition, IDOC has isolated Ms. Monroe from other prisoners at Logan and denied her any meaningful human contact. She has spent months in segregation or other isolating environments. Her depression, PTSD, and feelings of hopelessness have rapidly increased. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture has affirmed that solitary confinement may

amount to torture, and that its use over 15 days should be prohibited.<sup>1</sup> Two recent articles have confirmed just how harmful prolonged solitary confinement can be.<sup>2</sup>

We fear that Ms. Monroe is being socially isolated and given substandard medical care because of who she is—a Black transgender woman. Ms. Monroe was hopeful that at Logan she would be treated as the woman she is, but instead staff have refused to use her female name and pronouns. They call her “Mr. Patterson,” “it,” or “whatever the f\_\_\_ you are.” IDOC tries to justify this by saying Ms. Monroe has committed misconduct, but Logan houses non-transgender women of all security levels who have been accused of the same, and even much more serious, types of misconduct as Ms. Monroe. Only Ms. Monroe is treated as an “other” or a dangerous “predator.” According to Dr. Randi Ettner, a national expert on medical care for transgender people, Ms. Monroe “is now experiencing the erosion of her coping strategies and the psychological decompensation that precedes suicide and is the result of inadequate treatment of gender dysphoria.”

While Ms. Monroe’s lawyers have asked the federal judge in the Southern District to grant her and other transgender prisoners immediate relief, we ask that you require IDOC to take the initiative to address Ms. Monroe’s dire circumstances rather than waiting for the court to order it. Absent immediate action, we fear that Ms. Monroe’s extreme suffering will lead her to take her own life.

Sincerely,

AIDS Foundation Chicago  
American Friends Service Committee Chicago  
Black and Pink Chicago  
Center on Halsted  
Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation  
Chicago Chapter of the National Organization for Women  
Chicago Community Bond Fund  
Chicago Abortion Fund  
Chicago Foundation for Women  
Chicago House  
Children and Family Justice Center

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*, United Nations General Assembly, Human Right Council, Thirty-first Session, 7 (Feb. 24, 2016), available at [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session31/Documents/A-HRC-31-57-Add-1-E, F, S only-.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session31/Documents/A-HRC-31-57-Add-1-E,F,S-only.docx).

<sup>2</sup> See Brinkley-Rubenstein, PhD, et. al, *Association of Restrictive Housing During Incarceration With Mortality After Release*, JAMA Network Open. 2019; 1 (finding that “exposure to restrictive housing is associated with an increased risk of death during community reentry”), available at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2752350>; Coppola, F., *The brain in solitude: an (other) eighth amendment challenge to solitary confinement*, Journal of Law and the Biosciences, 42, (Sept. 25, 2019) (finding based in part on recent neuroimaging studies that “[s]olitary confinement is a disfiguring and dehumanizing punishment, as it deprives people of their biological needs, it drastically changes their physiology, and causes severe psychological and physical harm.”), available at <https://academic.oup.com/jlb/advance-article/doi/10.1093/jlb/lz014/5573653>.

Equality Illinois  
Friends Who March  
Indivisible Oak Park Area  
Men4Choice  
Midwest Access Coalition  
Mijente  
Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration  
Planned Parenthood of Illinois  
Pride Action Tank  
She Votes Illinois  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Social Change  
Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois  
Women's Connection Project  
Women's March Illinois

cc: Deputy Governor Sol Flores  
Deputy Governor Dan Hynes  
Deputy Governor Christian Mitchell  
Deputy Governor Jesse Ruiz  
General Counsel Ann Spillane  
Chief Legal Counsel Camile Lindsay, for IDOC Acting Director Rob Jeffreys

## APPENDIX

### LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS

1. **AIDS Foundation Chicago (“AFC”)** mobilizes communities to create equity and justice for people living with HIV and related chronic diseases. To realize this mission AFC improves health equity, prevents new cases of HIV, serves as a collaboration and knowledge center, and is a bold voice for change.
2. **American Friends Service Committee (“AFSC”) Chicago** is a Quaker organization devoted to service, development, and peace programs throughout the world. AFSC’s work is based on the belief in the worth of every person, and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.
3. **Black and Pink Chicago** started in 2013. Black and Pink’s work toward the abolition of the prison industrial complex is rooted in the experience of currently and formerly incarcerated people. Black and Pink is outraged by the specific violence of the prison industrial complex against LGBTQ people, and responds through advocacy, education, direct service, and organizing.
4. **Center on Halsted** is the Midwest’s most comprehensive community center dedicated to advancing community and securing the health and well-being of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) people of Chicagoland. More than 1,000 community members visit the Center every day, located in the heart of Chicago's Lakeview Neighborhood.
5. **Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (“CAASE”)** is a not-for profit organization that envisions a community free from all forms of sexual exploitation, including sexual assault and the commercial sex trade. CAASE addresses the culture, institutions, and individuals that perpetrate, profit from, or support sexual exploitation. CAASE’s work includes prevention, policy reform, community engagement, and legal services.
6. **Chicago Chapter of the National Organization for Women (“CNOW”)** is dedicated to making legal, political, social, and economic change in our society in order to eliminate sexism and end all oppression. The mission of CNOW is to be Chicago’s feminist resource in the areas of economic equality, women’s health, reproductive freedom, ending violence against women, and LGTBQ rights.
7. **Chicago Community Bond Fund (“CCBF”)** is an organization that pays bond for people charged with crimes in Cook County, Illinois. Through a revolving fund, CCBF supports individuals whose communities cannot afford to pay the bonds themselves and who have been impacted by structural violence. CCBF also engages in public education about the role of bond in the criminal legal system and advocates for the abolition of money bond.
8. **Chicago Abortion Fund (“CAF”)** works to remove barriers to abortion care and to build power within communities with low access.

9. **Chicago Foundation for Women (“CFW”)** invests in women and girls as catalysts, building strong communities for all. CFW funds organizations working to solve the biggest problems facing women and girls: economic insecurity, violence and lack of access to health care and information. In addition to grantmaking, CFW invests in developing women leaders and advocates, and brings together diverse coalitions to collaborate, share resources and develop solutions.
10. **Chicago House** is a social service organization that supports individuals impacted by HIV/AIDS and the broader LGBTQ community with housing, health, and employment support.
11. **Children and Family Justice Center (“CFJC”)** is a comprehensive children’s law office and part of the Bluhm Legal Clinic at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. At the CFJC, attorneys and law students work together to promote justice for children, adolescents, and their families through direct legal representation, policy advocacy, and law reform.
12. **Equality Illinois** is the state’s civil rights organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) people. Equality Illinois envisions a fair and unified Illinois where everyone is treated equally with dignity and respect and where all people live freely regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.
13. **Friends Who March** began after the Chicago Women’s March. Friends Who March encourages people to #GetActiveAndTakeAction against all forms of injustice and politics. We need boots on the ground to protect the rights of all.
14. **Indivisible Oak Park Area (“IOPA”)** is a grassroots organization located in Oak Park and the surrounding area who is committed to electing progressive leaders, realizing bold progressive policies, rebuilding our democracy, and defeating the Trump agenda. Built on values of inclusion, diversity, tolerance, and fairness, we employ advocacy tactics to amplify the voices of threatened communities and hold our members of Congress and our state legislatures accountable to constituents.
15. **Men4Choice** is an organization whose mission is to unconditionally support the women and impacted individuals leading this movement by activating, educating, and mobilizing male allies into the fight to protect and expand reproductive freedom. Men4Choice envisions a future where male allies are actively deconstructing misogyny by transforming the way they think about, speak about, and engage in the fight for reproductive freedom.
16. **Midwest Access Coalition** provides abortion access to hundreds of people every year across the Midwest. Midwest Access Coalition does this by assisting individuals with logistical, financial, and emotional challenges in traveling to, from, and within the Midwest.
17. **Mijente** is a national digital and grassroots hub for Latinx and Chicanx movement building and organizing that seeks to increase the profile of policy issues that matter to its communities and increase the participation of Latinx and Chicanx people in the broader movements for racial, economic, climate, and gender justice.

18. **Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration** is a Chicago-based mutual support organizing group growing the collective power of mothers who are surviving state and interpersonal violence and in particular those who have been harmed by incarceration.
19. **Planned Parenthood of Illinois (“PPIL”)** provides affordably priced high-quality sexual and reproductive health care services to more than 70,000 women, teens and men throughout Illinois. Through health care services, educational programs and advocacy efforts, PPIL works to ensure and protect the reproductive health and rights of each individual.
20. **Pride Action Tank (“PAT”)** is a project incubator and think tank that is focused on actions that leads to improved outcomes and opportunities for LGBTQ+ communities in the Chicago region through a collective process of inquiry, advocacy and action.
21. **She Votes Illinois** is a statewide political action committee aimed at highlighting the important of women’s voices in elections, government, and policymaking. She Votes Illinois’ work focuses on three things: voting, education, and getting more women involved in politics.
22. **Shriver Center on Poverty Law** fights for economic and racial justice. Over their 50-year history, they have secured hundreds of victories with and for people living in poverty in Illinois and across the country. Today, they litigate, shape policy, and train and convene multi-state networks of lawyers, community leaders, and activists nationwide. Together, we are building a future where all people have equal dignity, respect, and power under the law.
23. **Social Change** is a national non-profit committed to the radical transformation of protest into progress by working together with a network of organizers, lawyers, legislators, journalists, artists, and other storytellers seeking to improve the social reality of communities of color, to support and defend impoverished and divested households, and to uplift institutions committed to transforming lives and communities through strategic partnerships, community capacity building, and technical assistance.
24. **Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois (“UUPMI”)** equips Unitarian Universalists in Illinois to transform institutions and support people harmed by the prison industrial complex. UUPMI fosters connections between UU congregations and Illinois prisoners by offering liberal religious ministry inside prisons, advocating for policy changes related to prisons, and teaching radical hospitality to congregations welcoming formerly incarcerated people.
25. **Women’s Connection Project (“WC”)** uses a three-pronged approach to strengthen women’s leadership, develop a local plan and actionable recommendations to improve care services for Cis and Trans women of color. The WC works directly with individuals, providers and community.
26. **Women’s March Illinois** is the Illinois chapter of the national Women's March organization, whose mission is to harness the political power of diverse women and their communities to

create transformative social change. Women's March is a women-led movement providing intersectional education on a diverse range of issues and creating entry points for new grassroots activists and organizers to engage in their local communities through trainings, outreach programs, and events. The Illinois chapter focuses on issues that are important to our communities here, including racial justice, and ending state violence and violence against women and femmes, among other core issue areas.