

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 4, 2013

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

Dear Director Samuels:

Thank you for your response to our letter of August 2, which expressed a number of concerns over the proposed relocation of the female inmates who are currently housed at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) in Danbury, Connecticut. The analysis included in your letter provides a level of detail that was not previously available, and is helpful as we continue to evaluate the proposal put forward by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP).

We appreciate the BOP's goals of reducing overall prison crowding and attempting to locate inmates as close as possible to their release residences. However, we continue to have concerns with the BOP's plan with respect to the Danbury facility, and believe there are a number of questions that remain to be answered before proceeding with the mission change.

Your letter notes that there are 348 inmates (not including non-citizens or those who will be released prior to the end of the year) from Northeast or Mid-Atlantic states currently at FCI Danbury. Those inmates are slated to be transferred either to the minimum security FCI Danbury camp, the Secure Female Facility in Hazelton, West Virginia, or the Federal Detention Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; as a result, you claim, approximately 243 of them will be closer to their residences than they are now. This assertion raises some additional questions:

- Realistically, how much additional capacity exists to relocate inmates to the FCI Danbury camp, which currently houses about 200 inmates? How many of the low security inmates currently at FCI Danbury are eligible to be housed in the minimum security camp?
- We understand that FDC Philadelphia is an administrative facility that has been used for pre-trial inmates; what capacity does this facility have to house sentenced inmates, and how many FCI Danbury inmates do you expect to relocate there?
- Although the Hazelton, West Virginia facility may be closer to some inmates' residences in strictly geographic terms, that does not necessarily translate to ease of access. What means exist to help families access the Hazelton prison? As previously noted, FCI Danbury is located along a densely populated urban corridor and is easily accessible by car and public transportation; do you anticipate that it will be more difficult for people to visit Hazelton than Danbury?
- While your response addresses the 348 women from the Northeast currently housed at Danbury, it fails to adequately address the permanent lack of a female facility in the Northeast to house future inmates. What efforts will be made to ensure that future female inmates from the Northeast are housed as close to family as possible?

We continue to be concerned with the status of the non-citizen inmates currently housed at FCI Danbury as well. The data you provided indicated that many of them either have residences in

the Northeast or were sentenced there, and it is very possible that they have family—including U.S. citizen family—in the area. Your letter indicates that these inmates will be moved without an effort to keep them near their families, an approach we find troubling. Where do you expect to transfer the majority of these inmates, and will there be any consideration given to providing family visitation for them?

Your letter also refers to the fact that the Aliceville, Alabama prison has long been planned as a female facility. While that is true, Congressional intent did not assume that building that facility would result in no federal prison facilities for women in the Northeast—which will be the consequence if FCI Danbury is converted to a male facility. Of the approximately 19 BOP facilities now available for women, 8 are in the Southeast, 7 are in the Southwest, and 2 are in the Midwest; FCI Danbury and its small camp are currently the only women's facilities in the Northeast. On the other hand, there are 25 male prison facilities in the Northeast. As you note, there are far more men than women in the federal prison system, and correspondingly far more facilities to house them; a more balanced geographic distribution of women's facilities is therefore even more critical in order to keep female inmates closer to their residences, given the sparse number of facilities for them. Has any consideration been given to redesignating one of the eight women's facilities in the Southeast, or one of the seven women's facilities in the Southwest, to house male inmates, instead of converting FCI Danbury? What changes would that require, and could it potentially result in more inmates being closer to their residences?

Recognizing that overcrowding in the federal prison system is a serious issue, and that women make up a small percentage of the overall prison population, it is nonetheless critical that we ensure that female inmates are treated equitably. According to the data you provided, 59% of the inmates at FCI Danbury have a child under the age of 21, which only serves to underscore the importance of family access. Allowing inmates to stay connected to their families and loved ones is important for all inmates, but it is particularly important—for both inmates and their families—in the case of mothers with young children.

The Senate Committee on the Judiciary intends to hold an oversight hearing on the Bureau of Prisons later this month, and this issue may well be addressed at that hearing. Furthermore, given the current lapse in federal appropriations, we believe it would be imprudent to spend the estimated \$1.1 million it would cost to transfer inmates at this time. We therefore urge you to continue your suspension of non-routine transfers from FCI Danbury. To be clear, this is not a request to shut down all inmate transfers from Danbury but rather to continue to suspend Danbury's mission change from a female to male facility. In addition, we request a meeting with you to discuss this matter, particularly as new information becomes available. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue, and appreciate your responsiveness to our concerns.



CHRISTOPHER MURPHY
United States Senator

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



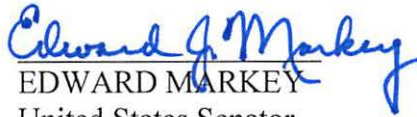
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United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



EDWARD MARKEY
United States Senator



JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senator



ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator

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