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SENATE



SENATOR DAPHNE JORDAN
43RD SENATE DISTRICT

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October 5, 2021

Ms. Sheila J. Poole
Commissioner, NYS Office of Children and Family Services
Capital View Office Park, 52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, New York 12144-2834

Dear Commissioner Poole:

I write on behalf of the men and women working at Brookwood Secure Center and the continued, alarming deterioration of workplace safety conditions at the facility.

A few weeks ago, local media reported on a large fight involving a dozen residents at the Brookwood Secure Center that injured three staff members. The altercation grew so violent that law enforcement, from multiple sources including the State Police and Columbia County Sheriff's Office, were called to the scene to restore order and secure the facility that also was damaged during the violence.

I agree wholeheartedly with Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) President Mary Sullivan's public call for your agency to take immediate steps to protect the public employees at Brookwood Secure Center from the most dangerous people under their care. CSEA Local 551 President Todd Gardner has also spoken on the need for OCFS to take the necessary, proactive steps to prevent further violence at the facility, and I concur with his comments.

As you know, Brookwood Secure Center has seen other shocking acts of violence perpetrated against the staff. In 2016, Charles Kiseumbo, a dedicated aide working at the facility, was violently assaulted and had to be airlifted for treatment due to the brain swelling he suffered during the brutal attack. Chronic staff shortages have contributed to the violence at Brookwood Secure Center and are jeopardizing the safety and security of facility staff. Sadly, former Governor Andrew Cuomo's shortsighted Executive Budget proposals have significantly hollowed out our public workforce. With a new Governor, I urge you to speak up and take immediate action to address the staffing shortfall to strengthen and safeguard the Brookwood Secure Center's dedicated workforce and help prevent future instances of violence. Specifically, I ask you to increase the number of full-time OCFS staff working at this facility and do so with the utmost urgency.

Additionally, OCFS must undertake all necessary steps to remove Brookwood Secure Center residents that have demonstrated a propensity for violence against other residents and facility staff. Without question, such violent residents must be immediately removed and relocated to an appropriate secure, supervised facility specializing in violent offenders. While OCFS has removed some violent residents, it

is incumbent upon your agency to remove more, many more, to better safeguard the staff.

Thank you for your attention to my request made on behalf of the devoted men and women working at Brookwood Secure Center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daphne V. Jordan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Daphne Jordan
State Senator, 43rd District

Cc: CSEA President Mary Sullivan and CSEA Local 551 President Todd Gardner