



September 24, 2019

PRISON ISSUES BOARD MEETING

My name is Verna Turnsplenty. I am writing to you on behalf of my grandson Michael AO # 3016478.

Michael was diagnosed with kidney failure 9 years ago. After his kidneys failed him, he needed to be on the dialysis machine for 5 hours 3 times per week. About a year after his kidneys failed he started drinking alcohol that lead to alcoholism. He was arrested because of this disease. It was recommended that Michael be sent to a local alcoholism treatment facility in Billings where he lived but the Judge wanted to send Michael to the WATCH program. The Watch Program would not take Michael because of his need to go to the hospital 3 times per week for 5 hours and then return to their facility. Instead, Michael was incarcerated at MSP. He is transported to the Butte hospital every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Even though it is MSPs policy to have 2 guards with inmates when off MSPs property only 1 guard makes each trip that includes at least 8 hours of guarding Michael. Michael is not a threat.

In my opinion, it is hypocritical to place a person with this disease into the prison system. A treatment center in his local area would have been a much better choice. A person with kidney disease requires a special diet. The food at MSP is not what a doctor would recommend. Michael's life span is being shortened every day because of the food that MSP provides him. MSP is slowly killing my grandson with the food provided. Michael has lost 60 pounds since being at MSP.

I go to MSP nearly every weekend to visit my grandson and to help Michael cope with this terrible situation and now MSP is nearly eliminating all visiting times. I don't have a computer but we are supposed to make reservations on the computer. Visitation has a phone number that is rarely answered and when it is answered you will get an incorrect answer or the person says they will call back and rarely do. Sally tells us that visitation is full so we can't visit and in reality, half of the tables are empty. Visitation should go to the 4 days per week as it used to be. We all were able to visit our loved ones.

Putting someone in prison for alcoholism disease is not the answer.

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