



August 2, 2010

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General, United States of America
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder,

We represent a broad array of religious, political, human rights, and civil rights groups united in our dedication to stopping rape in our prisons. Many of us were part of the extraordinarily diverse coalition of organizations and citizens that helped develop the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and worked to secure its unanimous passage in 2003.

At this moment, standards to eradicate sexual assault in prisons await your approval. We urge you to make a priority of completing your review and adopt the standards as swiftly as possible.

The magnitude of sexual abuse in our prisons is appalling. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that more than 60,000 prisoners, one of every twenty inmates, were sexually assaulted during the previous year. The scandal is even worse at juvenile institutions, where one in eight juvenile detainees were victims of sexual assault during a 12-month period. It is an abomination that the government does not protect individuals in its custody from sexual violence. Being raped in prison is devastating physically and emotionally for victims, and the negative consequences continue long after they finish their sentences and return to the community. For each day that the standards are delayed, more men and women - and, yes, boys and girls - will be raped.

PREA established a Commission to assess the problem and find solutions. The Commission was tasked with developing standards to guide corrections leaders in effective ways to prevent prison rapes, and to hold those officials accountable for achieving results.

Last year the Commission released its proposed standards after conducting a comprehensive study of the issues surrounding prison rape. It reviewed existing research, held site visits and public hearings across the country, formed expert committees, and consulted with corrections practitioners, academics, survivors of sexual abuse in detention and their advocates, legal experts, and health care providers. The Commission consulted with the nation's leading corrections experts at every step of this thorough and responsible review. The Commission distilled what it learned from this exhaustive process into the proposed standards.

Those standards will provide an important guide for corrections professionals to eliminate sexual abuse in their facilities and to measure the effectiveness of their efforts. The standards will also help hold corrections officials accountable. Such accountability is vitally important; it will help reform-minded officials identify their facilities' strengths and weaknesses, while

ensuring that those who still deny the high incidence of sexual abuse of inmates no longer are able to minimize the problem.

While many corrections leaders strongly support the standards, some officials have exaggerated the cost of implementing these basic measures. These officials ignore the fact that California and Oregon, both cash-strapped states with budget crises, have begun to implement the standards without substantial additional costs. More important, they ignore the huge costs of failing to address prisoner rape. For example, one state prison system recently paid \$100 million, after more than ten years of expensive litigation, to settle law suits by women who were abused by staff at a women's facility. Implementation of the Commission's recommendations will be cost-effective and will help corrections agencies meet their legal duty to protect inmates who have been placed in their care.

We recognize that sexual abuse in detention is an issue of tremendous concern to you and the Department of Justice. We strongly endorse the proposed standards, and respectfully ask you to make them binding at the earliest date possible.

Sincerely,

Pat Nolan

Vice President
Prison Fellowship

David A. Keene

Chairman, Board of Directors
American Conservative Union

Tom McClusky

Senior Vice President
Family Research Council Action

Tom Minnery

Senior Vice President
Government and Public Policy
Focus on the Family

Dr. Richard Land

President
The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
Southern Baptist Convention

Galen Carey

Director of Government Affairs
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Greg Mitchell

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Grover Norquist

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Project, Inc.

Alliance For Patient Safety.org

The Aleph Institute

National Association of Social Workers

**Justice and Witness Ministries/United
Church of Christ**

American Legislative Exchange Council

James Landrith
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Just Detention International

Open Society Policy Center

**National African American Drug Policy
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**Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network
(RAINN)**

The Rebecca Project

National Immigrant Justice Center

Human Rights Watch