

## House Public Safety Hearing

January 19, 2021

Greetings Chair Mariani, Vice Chair Frazier and Members of the Committee. My name is Thomas Evenstad, and I'm here to testify as to the utter failure of Commissioner Schnell's DOC in it's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Upon witnessing first-hand in MCF-Rush City the DOC's refusal to close dining halls where 100's of prisoners were forced to sit elbow to elbow and face to face for months, refused to allow social distancing, refused to provide masks, I filed Minnesota's first class action Covid-19 lawsuit in Federal Court (Evenstad v Schnell, et al. 20-cv-885). The ACLU of MN filed a lawsuit a week later the media made much ado about while ignoring my lawsuit, costing lives.

The negligence of the "Strategic Planning" is represented by the "quarantine" of prisoners in the General Population Units & not separating or segregating Covid-19 cases from the rest of the prisoners. I urged DOC to use MCF-Stillwater as the sole quarantine site as the physical structure allows for no staff contact with quarantined prisoners, yet handling all needs, i.e. meals, showers, rec, etc remotely from a protective area and close proximity to hospitals equipped to deal with Covid-19.

I had to sue again in June from Saint Cloud where I was double bunked for the 14 day "quarantine". I refer the Committee to Evenstad v Schnell, 20-cv-1464 for details. When I sued DOC at Saint Cloud there was a single positive case. I saw what was coming and tried to stop it but the DOC prevented me.

The DOC is recklessly endangering the public with its failed Covid-19 response. This lawsuit also seeks to improve public safety dramatically by ending the slave labor practices and allowing full use of the internet 24/7/365 to communicate

with loved ones, obtain employment that can be done remotely from prison and find housing and employment prior to release to the community.

The OLA report re Safety in the Prisons was exceptional and I recommend a thorough financial audit as the next order of business.

Please be advised I've proposed a Bill for the involuntary and indefinite civil commitment of violently dangerous persons...the VDP Act. I'm hoping you'll support.

Thank you.

Cordially,

Thomas Evenstad

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