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Governor Gretchen Whitmer
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer:

I am writing to express serious concern regarding ongoing conditions at the Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility, particularly as they impact incarcerated women with disabilities and chronic health conditions. I have been communicating about this correctional facility for a significant period of time, and I hear every single day about it. A recent report only reaffirms the urgent concerns many have.

Recent findings from Disability Rights Michigan describe a troubling shortage of wheelchairs and insufficient attendant assistance for women with mobility impairments. As reported, some incarcerated women are missing meals, medications, medical appointments, and rehabilitative programming simply because they cannot physically access these services. For individuals managing diabetes, seizure disorders, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses, these lapses present significant and preventable health risks. These concerns are compounded by longstanding allegations regarding environmental hazards within the facility, including the presence of black mold.

For women with asthma, compromised immune systems, or other respiratory vulnerabilities, exposure to mold can have severe consequences. The combination of mobility barriers, inconsistent medical access, and environmental health risks raises profound concerns under the Americans with Disabilities Act and constitutional standards requiring humane conditions of confinement.

According to reporting in the Detroit Free Press, Disability Rights Michigan has alerted the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) to these issues over many years, and were met with disappointing responses, including the Department denying issues exist at all. This is unacceptable and deeply troubling.

As the co-chair of the Bipartisan Congressional Disabilities Caucus, I am committed to protecting all people living with disabilities and chronic health conditions in every area of their lives, and ensure equal access to all the same spaces, resources, and opportunities. This does not exclude incarcerated individuals, who are entitled to the protections afforded by federal and state laws that entitle them to reasonable accommodation and prohibit discrimination.

Women in state custody are wholly dependent on the state for their safety, health, and dignity. Addressing these issues decisively would demonstrate Michigan's commitment to lawful, humane, and responsible corrections policy. The State of Michigan and MDOC need to work swiftly to address the needs of disabled individuals in their custody. Therefore, I respectfully urge your Administration to:

- Ensure an adequate supply and maintenance of wheelchairs and mobility devices
- Provide reliable attendant assistance so women can access meals, medication, and programming
- Release transparent findings regarding black mold testing and remediation
- Establish measurable oversight and public accountability for compliance improvements

Finally, I respectfully request answers to the following questions at your earliest convenience:

1. As of July 2025, MDOC reported that 126 inmates at the Facility had wheelchair prescriptions, but the prison only had 56 wheelchairs across 14 housing units.
 - a. Can you explain what process is in place for the Facility to fulfill wheelchair prescriptions?
 - b. What gaps in this process may account for failing to meet the number that is needed?
2. For the 82 wheelchair users who need attendants to assist them with propelling their wheelchairs, to what do you attribute a lack of aides who can provide this assistance?
 - a. How does the State plan to ensure there are enough wheelchair attendants to meet the needs of wheelchair users in the Facility, or to provide an adequate number of electric wheelchairs so meet the needs of wheelchair users?
3. Wheelchairs are often in poor condition, including “missing footrests, sunken seats, and broken arm rests.”
 - a. Can you provide information on how MDOC acquires these wheelchairs and what quality measures are in place to ensure that they are in good condition?
 - b. How does the MDOC plan to improve this process to ensure that wheelchairs are in appropriate condition?

4. Given the documented respiratory complaints and health complications reported by incarcerated women over several years, I respectfully request a clear and public update on the status of mold remediation efforts. Specifically:
 - a. What independent environmental testing has been conducted, and when?
 - b. What remediation measures have been completed, and what remains outstanding?
 - c. What health monitoring is in place for individuals who may have been exposed?
 - d. How is the state ensuring ongoing compliance with environmental and health safety standards?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your response and to meaningful progress on behalf of these women.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress