

**Board of Correction Meeting
February 9, 2021**

**Statement of Incarcerated Person
Presented by Jessica Coffrin-St. Julien**

I am 28 years old, and I was born and raised in Manhattan. I know New York City like the back of my hand. I've been homeless my entire life; I was a regular street kid growing up. Ten years ago, I was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

I was arrested in August of last year, so it's been six months incarcerated for me. This is my first time incarcerated, and I'm still learning about how things work here. Right now, I'm in Enhanced Supervision Housing. The building I'm in was actually the former box, and it's set up in almost the exact same way the box is. It seems like it's impossible to get out of here; I've been here almost four months.

They treat people really bad in ESH. I've been sprayed in the face with mace. The mace is incredibly powerful—it gets inside your sinuses and respiratory system. And it affects you psychologically because, once you get to the point of blindness, you start to panic. In general, when mace is in the air, you know it. Sometimes you'll still feel it days after it's been sprayed, or, if someone is sprayed upstairs, you can feel a trace of it downstairs.

The staff also write false reports; they plant things on you that aren't permitted inside the jail, like metal objects. That happened to me right off the bat: they told me I had a metal object on me I know I didn't have. We can't even get liquids or toothbrushes in the mail here. For me, I'm trying to figure out how to get my time reduced; I'm not trying to add onto it. I wouldn't do anything to risk adding time to my sentence, but, in ESH, anything the staff says goes. Sometimes, ESU, a special search team, is sent to our cells to look for contraband. They look like GIs: they wear full military gear, steel-toed boots. When that happens, it is intense and overwhelming.

In ESH level one, the staff really violate your privacy. Every time you need to leave the floor, they want you to squat, cough, check your mouth and ears. They're really nasty about it. It is very uncomfortable to be searched in that way, and they just want to get it done. I try to just get through it as quickly as possible, but it feels like a violation.

It's also hard to get your basic needs met in ESH. Just the other day, it was impossible for me to get a drink of water. The sink in my cell does not turn on. It's common to be in a cell that has either no hot water or no cold water, but usually you at least have some water. But I do not have any water at all. That's tough because you need water to live. But I couldn't get water because the COs weren't making their rounds like they are supposed to. It's worse lately because they're super short

on staff. The other day, we locked out late, but they still want to lock in at the regular time. That's time ticking away from us.

I have been able to get some medical care for a foot injury in ESH, but I haven't really gotten any type of mental health treatment. I've talked to a couple people really briefly, but it's difficult to create rapport. Especially right now, I'm just starting to realize that I'm going to be incarcerated for some time. Every day I wake up, and it hits me: I'm in jail. That's hard to deal with, and hard to talk about. I hope they can start bringing back programs for us. Right now, there's nothing to look forward to: no programs, no nothing, every day is the same. There's no way to keep track of time.

I got to the box on maybe my tenth day of being incarcerated. They gave me twenty days of time in the box. By now, I've been to the box three times. With every ticket you get, you have to do some time, plus they charge you a \$25 surcharge. That's hard on my family; my mother and sister are working less hours lately, so they don't really have anything to spare sometimes.

When I'm in the box, every day just drags on. The cells are very small; it's very hard to exercise or move around. We're not allowed to have commissary, so we spend the day starving, waiting four or five hours to get food. The feeding is done by staff, and we have to be on the gates of our cells, shouting out, asking to be fed. It makes me feel like I'm competing with my neighbors to get food. The last time I was in the box, I just shut down. I didn't want to talk to anyone, I didn't want anyone to touch me, I just wanted to sleep and stay in bed all day. I was in a really bad place.

Sanitation-wise, the box is really unhygienic because we're in there 24/7, so things get messy but there is no way to keep it clean. A lot of times they won't give us a broom or nothing. There is no access to books, and I can hear people talking all day. Seeing and hearing other people breaking down can be very hard. There's no one to chat with, no human interaction, and that can be very stressful.

In the box, if a staff member is working who doesn't like me, I know that day is going to be bad. The COs can be very disrespectful. Like if I ask them to open the slot to my cell, sometimes they will close it more than halfway. There were two times where I was left cuffed in a very uncomfortable position in my cell for hours.

Staff will take showers away from you if they don't like you. Plus, if you have some type of medical issue, the COs don't always do their rounds when they are supposed to, so you can be up all night waiting for them to come. I have heard someone who is asthmatic scream that they can't breathe, and it took a long time for anyone to attend to him. Hearing that made me start to panic. I feel like the staff get a kick out of treating people bad. When I'm in the box, I feel like my life is on the line to a certain degree.