

Senator McBroom,

Let me start this with an apology for sending a letter and not being able to attend in person. My current situation since the closing of OCF has made attending not possible at this time. Second I would like to say any statements that are opinions are my opinions and in no way represents the Michigan Department of Corrections stance.

My understanding is the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the Auditor General's report on if the Department of Corrections has taken appropriate corrective measures in response to a reportable condition from the original report from Oct. 2012. The findings of the report have come back and have concluded that the reportable condition still exists.

I believe that this condition still exists because the state did not follow their own protocol in deciding what prison to close. The original recommendation was for the Department to maintain sufficient documentation to support its basis for Identifying and recommending correctional closures. If the state would have followed and documented the requirements that are set I don't believe OCF would have been the prison closed. You cannot provide any true transparency when your decision is not based entirely on facts.

I will do a small comparison to show what I mean. I have not went back and found all the supporting numbers but they are available. For the purpose of this I will use the Newberry Correctional facility (NCF) as my comparison prison.

1. **Age of a facility.** They listed OCF at 47 years old while in reality a large part of the prison wasn't open until June 2000. Make a large part of this only 18 years old. NCF is much older than 18 years old.
2. **Cost to operate.** The daily cost per prisoner to run NCF is higher than the overall daily cost per prisoner at OCF.
3. **Additional Improvements.** The cost sheet for improvements at OCF was minimal when compared to the cost of improvements in the future of NCF.
4. **Proximity to other facilities.** The nearest facility to OCF is 100 miles. NCF has 1 prison that is 60 miles away to the West and another 56 miles to the east. So that would be 2 prisons that would be able to absorb staff. Also many OCF employees were forced to go to a facility that was further than the 100 miles.
5. **Capacity and prisoner counts.** Both prisons are similar in size so this shouldn't come into effect.
6. **Unemployment rates.** I have not seen these numbers but would assume that both economies are in similar situations with lack of good paying jobs.
7. **Operational needs.** The states stance is that OCF was unable to provide the programming that NCF was able to provide. I have personally had an email correspondence with a department official about these programs. OCF was more than capable of adding most of the programs that were mentioned by this official. At little to no extra cost to the department. One big concern of the department was substance abuse and sex offender programs. It has been discussed many times and it appears that the state did not attempt to find specialized people to teach these programs at OCF. Some of these programs were contracted out. By that definition the person who bid the job would be responsible to ensure that the people were provided at the facilities as needed. Along with the fact that prisoner are often left or moved to a prison were their programming needs can be met.

So if we take all 7 factors and compare them apples to apples it would seem very clear that NCF would be the prison to close.

When being challenged on this decision based on the economic impact to the area the state response was that the 'impact is only one of the factors to determine if a prison should be closed'. I contradict that statement. Based on the above factors the only perceived advantage that NCF has over OCF was the operational needs. So if all factors are to be considered when making a decision once again it appears that OCF would not be the logical choice. They are reversing the statement of 'only one part of the decision process'. And using it as the apparent reason to close OCF with only one considering factor. How can the economic impact not be considered any more or less the operational needs?

I will give a personal account on the economic impact. Since the closing of OCF I have been forced to make a choice. Leave state service or go to Marquette to continue working for the state. The prison is a little over 2 ½ hours from my house. This makes traveling back and forth daily impossible. With that being said I now pay 300 dollars a month in rent in Marquette. I now spend money on gas, groceries, and clothes, all in Marquette instead of Ironwood. Along with the fact that I'm living in a rundown neighborhood like a broke college students. Really gives you a sense of how much the state cares about the people that work for them. My wife has worked for the local hospital for many years. With me being gone out of town during the week and her schedule of working 10 to 12 hour shifts again a decision had to be made. She had to decide to keep working at the hospital or to get rid of her dogs as we felt it wasn't fair to leave them unattended all day. She has decided to leave the hospital and find a new job. With this new job comes less money in our pockets to be able to spend locally. Also the hospital that already struggles to get and keep people have lost a long time employee. Once again having an effect on the area. Impact can be felt in many ways in an area besides financial lose.

My story is one of many. I have talked with many people that have very similar stories. How long before the trickledown effect takes place and the whole area begins to feel the impact. I fully understand that the impact of an area is only 1 part of the decision making process. However if we take everything into consideration it starts to show that the decision may not have been truly based on the criteria that has been set to be used. It has also been determined back in 2012 that the department had a reportable condition when it came to being transparent on these decisions. This same condition has not been corrected in 2018 as the state continues to close correctional facilities. 3 prisons in 2 years and no transparency in how each of these decisions have been made. Between the auditors general's findings and the F grade the state of Michigan received in 2015 from the center for public integrity it is clear that the department of corrections and the law makers of this state feel they can do as they want and not be held accountable to the people of the state.

The state did respond to the allegations that this condition does not exist and they have met the requirements. Upon reading the response the auditor once again did not agree with the reasons that the department gave. Seems like the department can make up things to fit their agenda with no consequences. I have also heard that one reason more information was not available is because many of the meeting that were held about the closure that no minutes of

the meetings were taken. Without a record of a meeting is it even considered a meeting?  
Sounds more like a group of people that don't want to go on the record with what is being said in the room.

A letter can only do so much when it comes to making a point. A conversation back and forth would be better but just is not possible at this time. I would be open to sitting down and discussing anything I have mentioned above in further detail. Anyone who is close to what has happen with this closure understands that this letter barely scratches the surface on everything that has been said and done. The biggest point in this whole decision is when do we start to hold people accountable for their actions when they are not doing the job they are being payed to do. Without that accountability these decisions will continued to be made based on what seems to be a political opinion more than actual facts. The sad part is almost any citizen in a private company that went to work and did not follow protocol would be removed from that company. Yet we don't hold state law makers and their administrative staff to the same standard. The department struggles to give any true answers to these questions on how they came to this decisions. It is time to correct the wrongs in this state.

Bill Osterman

