

Dear Governor Riley,

September 6, 2007

My name is Dana [REDACTED], and I am writing on behalf of the 25 women of Julia Tutwiler, and we reside in the HIV positive dorm, which is Dormitory E. We have been through many struggles, and our resources are exhausted. We are now faced with the continued problem of discrimination. In May 2005 we were able to attend J. F. Ingram Technical College. This was a major step considering that we were unable to attend for many years due to our positive status. We feel that times have changed, and research has proven the ways of contracting and transmitting the HIV infection, and whatever law that has us bound should be lifted. As ex-felons we will be required to maintain a job when we are released into society, and we feel that we should be able to start here. You may not know, but because of our HIV positive status we are cut from a lot of programs including Work Release, Community Corrections, Pre Discretionary Leave (PDL), and several other programs within the prison system. Rehabilitation starts here, but being HIV positive, we are denied access to these programs. We feel that this is extremely unfair, and we should have the same access to programs as the other women within the prison system.

When we try to talk to Warden [REDACTED], we are told to refer to the Leatherwood Lawsuit. After talking to many lawyers, we have found out that the Leatherwood Lawsuit is a suit for medical care. It has nothing to do with segregation and discrimination. This is an issue that we are faced with everyday. We are treated different, and we are placed in a segregated dorm labeled as the AIDS dorm. Many women come here just finding out that they are HIV positive, and when they are segregated, it give them no control over who they decide to disclose to. They are forced to disclose because they do not want someone from their hometown to call and tell their families before they have the chance to. By being singled out like we are, it also puts people's life in jeopardy. We had a woman form Mobile that was killed soon after she got home, because another inmate called Mobile and told people that she was HIV positive. Our latest setback was today. After I have completed and graduated the course of Floristry, I was called back to be a student aide. Because of my HIV status, Warden [REDACTED] told us that we could not attend. Being a student aide has several responsibilities including filling special orders that come through on almost a daily basis. This will give us the ability to further our education with hands on experience in the Floral industry. We have been denied this opportunity also.

We are asking you as people to please help us in this matter. We decided to write you because we do not know where else to turn. If given the chance, we will be able to become more productive member in society and the return rate will drop tremendously. It will also give us an opportunity to repay restitution, and taxes back to the state of Alabama, instead of depending on the state to take care of us.

We appreciate your time and consideration in this matter.

Thank you,

HIV positive women of Dormitory E

*This is a copy of the letter
sent to the Governor*