

BY CITY COUNCIL AS A WHOLE:

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Elizabeth has been learned that in March 2007, that the Department of Corrections pulled 40 women out of New Jersey's only women's prison, the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, and put them in lock-down conditions in New Jersey State Prison, the highest-security men's prison in the state; and

WHEREAS, the transfers themselves, which took place on two separate occasions, were brutal and humiliating. Without warning, armed guards in full riot gear raided a unit of the women's prison and pulled women from their cells. Women chosen for transfer were strip searched while being videotaped in the presence of male guards. In the chaos, women sobbed and cried out in panic. Many of the women have suffered abuse by men and were terrified of going to a men's prison; and

WHEREAS, the women, who did nothing to deserve the transfer, are being subjected to conditions in the New Jersey State Prison far worse than the men in the same prison and women in the women's prison:

- The women are kept in their cells up to 22 hours a day, not even being allowed to congregate in common areas.
- New Jersey State Prison has a clinic and an infirmary. The women prisoners are barred from these facilities.
- The prison also has a law library. Although a number of women have pending appeals or other ongoing legal proceedings, they are completely barred from the law library.
- New Jersey State Prison has a school complete with classrooms, teachers, and teaching materials. The women prisoners are completely barred from this school.
- The women aren't allowed into the main prison yard, but are sent to exercise in a tiny patch of grass and concrete below the main yard.
- Women aren't even provided the supplies necessary to take care of their bodies. The prison provides insufficient sanitary napkins and toilet paper.
- New Jersey State Prison has no programs to help women stay in contact with their children. Other inequalities and humiliations abound; and

WHEREAS, the abuses these women are suffering are happening because New Jersey is putting too many women in prison for too long, and because the Department of Corrections does not have a coherent plan for the women's prison population; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's prison population has grown by over 700% in the last three decades. Nationally, women are the fastest-growing segment of the prison population, even though only a third of women in prison committed violent crimes. Another third are imprisoned, often for years, for drug offenses. Imprisonment hurts these women without helping keep New Jersey safe; and

WHEREAS, women who don't really need to be in prison should be placed in appropriate rehabilitation placements and programs instead. Doing this would bring the women's prison population down to a manageable level, allowing the Department of Corrections to fulfill its public duties to provide for public safety and rehabilitate prisoners; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Elizabeth hereby requests that the Department of Corrections abandon its policy of involuntarily transferring women prisoners, many of whom are classified as medium-security and have excellent disciplinary records, to a giant (1,800 inmate) men's prison described by both its warden and the American Correctional Association as a "supermax" prison, we request that, for those women who wish to remain in the prison to be nearer to their families, conditions be drastically improved and made equal to those of the male prisoners and we request that the Department of Corrections present the New Jersey public with a plan for (1) reducing the needless incarceration of women, and (2) providing human conditions and rehabilitative opportunities to women in prison, in accordance with the Department's legal and moral duty; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution will be recorded in full upon the minutes of City Council.