**Testimony in front of the Sheriff Spending Commission**

My name is Marlene Pollock and I am a volunteer with Bristol County for Correctional Justice, a citizen’s groups formed in 2017 to hold Sheriff Hodgson accountable.

First, I hope the funding commission will look closely at the kickbacks from Securus to the Bristol County House of Correction for providing phone and now tablets to the incarcerated. As far as we can tell, there is no oversight on the relationship between Securus and the BCHOC. What money is gained by the jail in this arrangement is hidden. Meanwhile, the prices are outrageous and a huge drain on families struggling to keep contact with their loved ones. And the service is poor, with dropped calls the norm. Though we have called for oversight of all jails and prisons for this communication services provided by Securus, and how the money is spent, none seems to exist. Our organization is in support of H1900 a bill that would move the burden of paying for these calls to the state, enable the state to bargain effectively to dramatically reduce the prices of calls, and to sever the profit motive from these very important calls. But the question remains, how much goes into the coffers of BCHOC and how is it accounted for. The public has a right to know.

Secondly, in terms of Sheriff spending, as far as BCHOC goes, the funding that the Sheriff says he needs doesn’t seem to go to the maintenance and support of either the facilities of the jail itself, nor for the needs of the incarcerated. For example, both jails are filthy and the only cleaning that goes on is done by the incarcerated who are not given the supplies to really clean up the place. Before a recent visit by the DPH to the ASH St. jail a panicked staff did quick cleaning of black mold that had accumulated over 3 years. The jail is filled with insects and mice and no money is spent on trying to rid the facility of these pests that cause bites and infections.

From the looks of it, no money is spent on COVID protection. There is no sanitization that goes on, and very few masks are given out to people. Cells are not cleaned out even after being vacated by someone who has COVID. Anyone who says they have symptoms or asks for a test are put in the hole, which is filthy with feces and urine on the floor.

Though Bristol maintains an $8 million contract for health services, as far as we tell, there is very little health services offered. People are suffering with broken bones, eye infections, infected teeth, etc. and no proper health care is being done. We are hearing from inmates who report nursing staff laughing at people who are suffering with COVID.

The food is substandard and filled with preservatives and chemicals that are unfit for human consumption. The water is tainted at Ash St. so much so that CO’s have special water brought in, but its only the tainted water that the incarcerated can drink.

So our question is: if so little of the funding for the BCHOC goes for the maintenance of the population and the buildings, where does the rest of the money go? We need an accounting so that taxpayers are not shelling out money that ends up - who knowswhere? Certainly not for the purposes the legislature has intended.