



Office of the District Court Executive

LORETTA A. PRESKA
Chief Judge

EDWARD A. FRIEDLAND
District Court Executive

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT
Stephanie Cirkovich, (212) 805-0529

**SDNY CHIEF JUDGE LORETTA PRESKA JOINS OTHER FEDERAL JUDGES TO PROTEST THE
CONVERSION OF A FEDERAL PRISON**

On October 16, Chief Judge Loretta A. Preska of United States District Court for the Southern District of New York joined 11 other Chief Judges from the nation's Northeastern states to protest the conversion of a federal correctional facility from one that houses predominantly females to one that houses predominantly males.

In a letter addressed to Attorney General Eric Holder, the judges expressed their concern with a plan to convert FCI Danbury—the only correctional facility in the Northeast that houses women—to a predominantly male facility. Many of the women currently housed at FCI Danbury would be moved to a remote facility in Aliceville, Alabama.

Citing "important ramifications" for female inmates who are separated from their children and loved ones, the judges urged Attorney General Holder to reconsider the decision "[o]n behalf of the judges who are tasked with sentencing these women to federal prison."

Chief Judge Preska said of the letter: "We know that offenders who have regular visitation from their families are less likely to recidivate, and many of these incarcerated women have young children. I think it's important that these women be given an opportunity to rehabilitate their lives, and keeping them in a facility closer to home gives them that chance."

A copy of the letter follows this announcement.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
500 PEARL STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007-1312

LORETTA A. PRESKA
CHIEF JUDGE

212-805-0240
FAX 805-7941

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Re: FCI Danbury, Connecticut

Dear Attorney General Holder,

As the Chief Judges of the federal district courts in the Northeast and the Northeast corridor, we write to express our deep concern with the plan to convert FCI Danbury, the only federal correctional facility in the Northeast that houses women, to a predominantly male facility. It is our understanding that the result of the planned Danbury mission change would be that almost no women federal prisoners would be housed in the Northeast and that many of them would be moved to a remote facility in Aliceville, Alabama. On behalf of the judges who are tasked with sentencing these women to federal prison, we urge you to reconsider.

FCI Danbury currently houses approximately 1200 female inmates, most of whom were sentenced by judges from our courts. By virtue of its close proximity to New York, Boston, Hartford, Providence, Newark, and Springfield, and the availability of plentiful public transportation throughout the region, Danbury is readily accessible to the family and friends of those from our districts who are incarcerated there.

As judges responsible for sentencing and supervising criminal defendants, we well know that this accessibility has important ramifications for these inmates -- during their incarceration and afterwards. First, research indicates that offenders who have regular visitation are less likely to have disciplinary problems during incarceration. They are also less likely to recidivate. Indeed, the Bureau of Prisons ("BOP") recognizes this when it includes "family and community ties" in its risk classification system. In particular, BOP gives inmates points for family ties when determining what level of security placement is appropriate for a particular inmate. And receiving visits is considered in deciding whether an inmate is qualified to transfer to a less secure facility.

Second, a substantial majority of women in federal prison have young children. According to information recently provided by BOP, 59% of inmates at FCI Danbury have a child under the age of 21. Ensuring that inmates can stay connected to their families is important for all prisoners, which is why we frequently recommend that the defendants we sentence be housed in facilities as close to the Northeast as possible. But given the above noted statistic, this is particularly important in the case of mothers and young children. If the planned mission

change for Danbury goes forward, our ability to recommend incarceration near family members and children for male inmates will continue, but we will have no ability to do the same for female inmates.

Third, we see regularly in our courtrooms the emotional impact that separation of mother and child has on young children. We believe that maintenance of that relationship through regular visitation is important for mother and child alike.

We understand that BOP has provided information indicating that not all of the inmates who will be impacted by the planned mission change will be transferred to Alabama. In particular, BOP has indicated that approximately 300 of them would be moved to the Secure Female Facility in Hazelton, West Virginia or the Federal Detention Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Although we are encouraged that BOP is considering all available options, and mindful of the challenges inherent in running a national prison system, we remain concerned that neither of these options will address the issues outlined above. First, although West Virginia may not be as geographically distant as Alabama, it will still be prohibitively inaccessible for many families who are currently able to make regular visits to their loved ones at Danbury. Second, FDC Philadelphia is a detention facility, which means that it has a higher security level with more restrictive conditions of confinement than the Danbury facility. As a result, the relative advantage of proximity may be counterbalanced by harsher conditions of confinement and fewer opportunities for correctional treatment. And, finally, transfers to the West Virginia and Philadelphia facilities will not address the long-term lack of housing for women inmates in the Northeast. As the judges who will sentence women defendants in the future, we are concerned about the ability of future inmates to maintain these critical ties with children and family.

For all these reasons, we respectfully request that you reconsider the decision to close the women's facility at Danbury. Like you, we remain committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all federal prisoners and their families and we look forward to working with you in developing a long-term solution that meets the needs of women inmates in the Northeast.

Sincerely,



Loretta A. Preska
Chief Judge, Southern District of New York

/s/
Janet Hall
Chief Judge, District of Connecticut

/s/
Gregory Sleet
Chief Judge, District of Delaware

/s/
John Woodcock
Chief Judge, District of Maine

/s/

Deborah Chasanow
Chief Judge, District of Maryland

/s/

Joseph Laplante
Chief Judge, District of New Hampshire

/s/

Patti B. Saris
Chief Judge, District of Massachusetts

/s/

Jerome B. Simandle
Chief Judge, District of New Jersey

/s/

Carol B. Amon
Chief Judge, Eastern District of New York

/s/

William M. Skretny
Chief Judge, Western District of New

York

/s/

Christopher C. Conner
Chief Judge, Middle District of Pennsylvania

/s/

Mary M. Lisi
Chief Judge, District of Rhode Island