

OPEN LETTER

Cheryl Strange, Secretary
Department of Corrections
Washington State

Sent via email

Dear Secretary Strange:

The Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism (FAIR), together with the undersigned on behalf of female inmates at Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW), urgently implores the Department of Corrections (DOC) not to preemptively grant Bryan “Amber” Kim’s recent requests—either to be returned to WCCW or released outright.

Mr. Kim, a 36-year-old male inmate who was convicted of brutally murdering his parents, is currently housed at Monroe Correctional Facility. He claims he does not feel safe there. He alleges that housing him in a men’s prison constitutes cruel and unusual punishment. Although his Petition is before the Washington Court of Appeal, Division I, we understand that the DOC may independently choose to return him to WCCW at any time.

We cannot speak to Mr. Kim’s feelings, but we must emphasize the grave consequences his return would have on the female inmates at WCCW. Over the past several months, FAIR has communicated with hundreds of incarcerated women, many of whom have filed formal reports describing severe harms resulting from forced co-housing with male inmates. Such reports include:

- A female inmate was sexually harassed and groped in her sleep by a male inmate.
- A disabled woman in a wheelchair was physically attacked by a 6’7” male inmate.
- A female inmate’s fibromyalgia symptoms have intensified due to stress from male co-habitation, necessitating new medicalization.
- Multiple women have been traumatized by voyeurism, sexual advances, and exposure to “consensual” sexual activities— violations of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), which deems all such scenarios rape.
- A female inmate’s PTSD and anxiety triggered by proximity to male offenders.

The DOC’s policy of placing male prisoners who self-identify as transgender in a women’s facility has led to ongoing discrimination, violating the Fourteenth and Eighth Amendments. This was the reason why Mr. Kim was removed from WCCW in June 2024. Returning him would not only undo a correct decision, but would also dangerously heighten the risk to female inmates who have already endured physical, sexual, and psychological harm.

Women's prisons are not designed to manage the risks posed by male inmates, many of whom have histories of violent crime. Female inmates, disproportionately survivors of past male abuse, are now trapped in conditions that exacerbate their vulnerability and trauma. This situation is intolerable, discriminatory, and unlawful.

We urge the DOC, in the strongest possible terms, to reject Mr. Kim's requests. Do not send him back to WCCW. The safety and well-being of female inmates must not be sacrificed.

Sincerely,

Monica Harris, Executive Director, FAIR

Leigh Ann O'Neill, Director of Legal Advocacy, FAIR