

THE PLIGHT OF JAILHOUSE LAWYERS & THE PERILS OF SELF-ADVOCACY WHILE INCARCERATED

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Through the impactful lens of his life experiences and observations, Geoffrey Reese writes about his transformation into a Jailhouse Lawyer. Mr. Reese explores what led to his deep commitment to Criminal Justice and Prison Reform.

Greetings to the readership of the Harbinger. My name is Geoffrey Reese, and I am a forty-four-year-old African-American male. I was born/raised in Houston, Texas. Unfortunately, I've spent over two decades (20+ years) of my adult life imprisoned in a total of three states (Texas, Maine, and Massachusetts, in chronological order). My current place of confinement is the Souza Baranowski Correctional Center, and my contact information is provided in the closure of this narration. I thank you all in advance for taking the time to read my story of how I have persevered to become a "jailhouse" lawyer.

I have been on a sixteen-year journey as an inmate in the New England region's prison system, specifically, Maine and Massachusetts. While unique and worth sharing, my testament is undoubtedly similar to many other men/women confined in correctional facilities throughout the United States.

¹⁰⁰ My name is Geoffrey Reese, and I am an African-American/Native-American/French male. I'm a forty-four-year-old Sagittarius. I was born/raised in Houston, Texas, but have also resided in the following states: Louisiana; Georgia; Florida; Ohio; and Maine. I have a B.S. in Psychology, with a concentration in Human Sexuality, and am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Theology while incarcerated, and Paralegal/Legal Assistant certification. I am a writer. I enjoy reading; culinary arts; listening to music; playing basketball, chess, and billiards; meeting new people; and good conversations, debates, and non-hostile arguments. If you're interested, you may also review a separate, recently published essay of mine, contained in the Fall 2024 issue of Guild Notes (Volume 49, No.3)- a publication of The National Lawyers Guild - entitled, "*Holding Healthcare Professionals Accountable*". I encourage you to correspond via "snail" mail, and/or, via email through Corrlinks (setup a FREE account on their website, and "add me" as a contact). I appreciate your attention to my work.

My first experience in a correctional facility was visiting my father's brother at the Harris County Jail. My mother finally agreed to let me visit, and by then, my uncle had done over a decade (10+ years) of jail and prison bids. I was young enough that I had to be accompanied by an adult, but not too young to remember the sights and sounds that would permanently imprint my mind while sitting in fascination and excitement for an hour. I would return to that same jail and eventually endure some of what I observed when I was a teenager. I was also transferred to an alternative school – a privatized, structured school for juvenile students who were expelled from public school and/or placed on juvenile probation.

At the age of fifteen, I was detained at the Harris County Juvenile Detention Center after being arrested at my local public high school for possessing marijuana and codeine with promethazine cough syrup (AKA “syrup,” “lean,” or “drank”). I was given probation that I successfully completed.

At the age of eighteen, I had already done county jail time for misdemeanor offenses. As a result of my first felony, I was given adult supervision, including an electronic monitor worn on the ankle. I ended up catching a new felony and was given an enormous bond that led to me eventually accepting a plea deal for four years of prison. I was committed to the custody of the Texas Department of Corrections in December of 2000. I met many “jailhouse lawyers,” prisoner advocates, and wise “old-school” guys (i.e., inmates over the age of 45) that I learned from. However, honestly, I was too short (the time I had to serve) to be concerned with learning the law and had other interests at that juncture

in my self- development. Youngsters and “short-timers,” e.g., those with less than 5 years to serve, are often unenthused about learning and equipping themselves with knowledge, including law, to fight for their rights or against the system. Typically, at the least, most literate inmates pursue learning law to the extent necessary to pursue their needs while incarcerated. I was different. I was intrigued by law as a discipline and field of study. I was interested in learning how to apply it, as well as, use it to vindicate my rights and hold the people in authority over myself and other prisoners accountable.

On May 2nd, 2008, I was arrested and charged with Attempted Murder and detained in the York County Jail as a pre-trial detainee with a 1-million-dollar cash bail. Waking up after barely sleeping was not only a surreal feeling, but felt like a nightmare that became a reality. When facing a serious charge that can result in a significant period of confinement, regardless of how long of a sentence one already endured before, a level of worry, anxiety, and anticipation is activated. I was facing 30 years if I took my case to trial, and I was from out-of-state and unfamiliar with Maine law at the time. My family contacted our attorney, and she flew to Maine days after my arrest. She was only able to counsel me during visitations. She couldn't be my defense lawyer because she wasn't licensed in Maine, nor would the Assistant District Attorney prosecuting my case speak candidly with her about my case. I was afraid of the possibility of spending decades behind prison walls in another state. I had no outside support, nor did I know anyone in Maine. I didn't know any attorneys, nor if I'd be appointed one by the court free-of-charge. I was soon appointed an attorney after my arraignment,

where Maine’s judicial system used the “lawyer of the day” model, in which a public defender represents all the defendants on that day’s docketed court appearances for arraignment. I was eventually appointed an attorney partner of a well-known law firm that specialized in criminal defense, who’d ultimately withdraw from my case due to terminal illness. Alternatively, I was appointed the firm’s lead attorney and another apprentice as his co-counsel. I faced a maximum-sentence of 30-years for the major and most serious of my three charged offenses. I was young and restless, spending my time tirelessly studying and learning Maine Law to prepare my defense. I was made a ridiculous plea offer that I declined instantly, which was like 27 years, all but 24 years suspended, i.e., I’d have to serve 24 years and be on probation for the remaining three years. The conversations between my attorneys and I shifted to a potential trial, and discussion on our preparation ensued. I went to trial and was found guilty by a jury on the charge of Elevated-Aggravated Assault and Aggravated Assault. I pled guilty to Felony Possession of a Firearm before the beginning of trial, and the five-year sentence was run concurrently.² My sentencing was the following month, and the judge gave me 29 years. The maximum for the class A felony charge was/is thirty (30) years. My attorneys and I filed a notice of appeal shortly thereafter. I was subsequently committed to the custody of the Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) and transported to the Maine State Prison, a maximum-security facility.

² A “concurrent” sentence is when more than one sentence is issued for separate convictions, but ONLY the highest length of sentence is served, and the beginning of each sentence is begun simultaneously. In contrast, a “consecutive sentence is when a defendant receives more than a single sentence of incarceration to be served one-after-another, i.e., the defendant must serve the combined length of all sentences for each conviction.

I've spent the majority of my sixteen years of incarceration confined at the Maine State Prison (MSP), where I was committed in August of 2009. Upon my first year of residency there, I soon noticed the lack of diversity, overt racism, and discrimination. There were probably less than 75 African-American Inmates, like myself, out of the approximate 1000 residents, which wasn't dissimilar from the less than 5% minority or "non-white" population of the entire state of Maine. The prison's administrative body consisted of all white people, and there was one black nurse and two black correctional officers (C.O.s). Most of the minority inmates deliberately moved to the same housing area to be comfortable and unified. I opposed those sentiments and saw value in the theory of "less is more" and being "the only" black guy in my pod.

I would soon be encouraged to attend the Maine State Prison's (MSP) NAACP (National Association for the Advance of Colored People, founded during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s) branch's monthly meetings held in the chapel for members and general population inmates alike. I met some decent and seemingly like-minded fellow inmates, including "long-timers," i.e., inmates with long sentences, whose names had arisen in conversation leading up to the event. Coincidentally, the president of the MSP NAACP branch was a black inmate I had heard good things about who was coincidentally from my home state – Texas. His name is Joseph Jackson, and he would eventually be transferred to the Maine Correctional Center, where he'd attain his master's degree and be released. Soon after, he became the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC) coordinator. I was asked by him and others to join the MSP branch of the NAACP as the

secretary and a member of the Executive Board membership. I was reluctant to do so hastily, as I didn't know many people, including Board members, nor had I decided on what commitments were conducive to my imagined path forward on the arduous journey ahead of me. I would eventually oblige the request and embark on a role that allowed me to meet with the prison's administration monthly, and the commissioner of MDOC quarterly. This was a significant opportunity for me to meet, acquaint, and understand the people who ran the prison, i.e., the administrative body, and made decisions that affected the inmate population. Our Board was frequently joined by the President of Portland, Maine's NAACP branch, Rachel Talbot-Ross, and/or other community leaders and public officials, legislators, and attorneys, when necessary. Truth is, the outcomes and meaningful results were scarce, and agreements often fell apart despite lengthy discourse and seemingly productive dialogue. Overall, unless the MDOC officials and prison administrators who attended these meetings were compelled to act on their own desires, motives, or in agreement, these meetings were futile and nothing more than "unproductive" collective discourse. If nothing more, I took away a better understanding and insight into how certain people thought and formed decisions.

Back then, I'd invest the necessary time in getting familiar with the prison's administrative rules/regulations, standard operating procedures (S.O.P.'s), and Departmental policies. I used the prisoner grievance process, as needed, which was frequent. It seemed inevitable that I would be known for my self-advocacy and tendency to use the administrative complaint process, as well as my tendency to correspond to the appropriate staff having jurisdiction over issues, concerns, or

aggrievements. It is true that some people in positions of authority, especially in the correctional system, are intimidated by intelligence, penmanship, and inmates who are knowledgeable and articulate. It isn't a surprising reality that those who seek to oppress, control, and manage "by any means necessary" are intimidated by inmates like myself. An administrator with a background in law once told me that I was an intelligent young man and should save my time and money on filing lawsuits because I would not win. This was an attempt to discourage me, although he likely believed it to be true. Not only would I never forget this comment, but I vowed to prove him wrong. I accomplished my wish to use the law to hold the Department of Corrections (DOC) and its employees accountable. Consequently, as imagined, varied forms of retaliation ensued, including, but not limited to, my being transferred out of state.

I have been fortunate to meet and build with other jailhouse lawyers and prison advocates who have shared similar interests and promote zealous advocacy. I have learned the definitions of legal terms and jargon, rules of civil and criminal procedure, rules of court and evidence, service and process, discovery; motion writing; summary, and declaratory judgment; the proper format of pleading; navigating Westlaw and/or, Lexis Nexis; case law researching; and how to frame cogent legal arguments. There are many aspects of each that I had to learn on my own through self-education and tutelage of attorney acquaintances.

So many attorneys that I've been appointed, hired, or have been referred to have been mentors and educators who have enhanced my understanding and knowledge of law. Many have offered me their assistance and have been willing to

review motions and pleadings, the Code of Ethics governing professions, and how to file complaints to State Licensing Boards free of charge. I feel lucky to have had this professional guidance in civil, criminal, and constitutional law. There are many helpful things that attorneys can do to aid advocacy on the inside. They can teach and instruct; provide informational materials, templates, and useful resources and referrals; review and critique legal work and pro se filings; and provide pro bono services annually, although selectively, and as some codes of ethics and state law require.

I can vividly remember my first ever “pro se” pleading filed in Maine while incarcerated. It involved a denial of sneakers I had asked for permission to have shipped to me at MSP, which was granted by the property officer, but was denied by him after the sneakers were delivered due to their retail value, which was based on a deliberate revision to the policy in retaliation for my valid grievance submitted after the rescinded permission had already been given. Prior to my filing of the petition, pursuant to Rule 80C (Judicial Review of Final Agency action) of the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, I filed a formal grievance and, as required, exhausted the administrative remedies available to me. The requirement of “exhaustion of administrative remedies” was enacted by the Prison Litigation Reform Act decades ago. The procedural exhaustion requirement consists of the complainant meeting every step or phase of an agency’s administrative grievance process.³

³ The requirement is for the agency to be given the rightful opportunity to address/correct complaints against it prior to any civil action being commenced. Exceptions to this requirement exist, but consist of extraordinary circumstances, which the burden is then on the complainant to prove, impeding his access or ability to exhaust the entire process.

After completing the strenuous exhaustion requirement, I filed a petition for Judicial Review of Final Agency action pursuant to the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure 80C (essentially an appeal of a governmental action) using forms that I'd obtained from the facility librarian. The proceedings are fairly simple in that the Attorney General's Office represents the state agency (MDOC), they must provide the court and petitioner with a certified record of the final agency action in controversy, e.g., the multiple-level decisions of the exhausted grievance process; entire record of prisoner disciplinary proceedings; or entire record of a classification hearing and appeal; certain motions and civil procedures as ordinary civil action applies; and then the scheduling order of briefs to be filed, and/or, oral arguments. I have prevailed on approximately 50% or more of the petitions filed between 2012 and 2023. Following the denial of my first petition for judicial review of the grievances involving the deprivation of the brand-new Jordan sneakers, I was one of many involved in an incident and blamed for allegedly inciting a riot when a pod officer was attempting to illegitimately mass-punish everyone for the individual behavior of a fellow resident. Consequently, I was terminated from my gainful employment in the MSP Industries Program (woodshop), suspended from my leadership role as the Vice-President of the MSP N.A.A.C.P., and given every possible sanction, e.g., monetary fine, loss of good time, and disciplinary restriction time. I was livid. I did the research and filed what I believed was an actionable multi-count complaint under 42 U.S.C. §1983 for perceived violations of my civil rights. Petitions in state court are much different than a §1983 action, which is a federal statute, in the manner in which it must be

styled, pursuant to Rules of Court and Civil Procedure.⁴ It was the first civil suit that I had filed, and the last that I would self-litigate under any federal statute. I didn't survive the defendant's motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim. I'd later read two things that respectively would inspire and motivate me: 1) that "a man who represents himself has a fool for a lawyer," and while I don't entirely agree with this demoralizing prejudgment, I concede that it is, more often than not, true; and 2) more than 70% of self-litigated prisoner suits do NOT survive motions for dismissal. I have learned that this is largely due to deficiencies in the way that pro se prisoner litigants improperly frame or present their claims, even when they have merit. It was a major lesson that only cost me the filing fee and minor expenses incurred.

Along this perilous and eventful course of self-determination, and trial and error, I have placed myself on the mailing list of many national newsletters and joined many advocacy and activist organizations, including, but not limited to, the American Civil Liberties Union (A.C.L.U.); National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Coalition United for Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE); the National Lawyers Guild (NLG); Critical Resistance; Jailhouse Lawyers Initiative; Maine Prisoners Advocacy Coalition; Restorative Justice Institute of Maine; and Restorative Justice Project of Maine. Additionally, I have subscribed to informative legal publications, including varied law journals,

⁴ Notably, there's a distinguishable difference between a "petition" and a "complaint" (action). A petition is used for urging the court to review something that was decided by an agency of a state or federal government, court, or something the law gives a petitioner standing to request judicial review of something. In contrast, a "complaint" or "action," is brought under existing state or federal statute whose language gives legal standing to sue for a particular reason, often within time-limitations.

Prison Legal News, and Criminal Legal News. It is important and insightful for me to access informative news and developments within systems that envelope me or directly affect me.

In 2016, I was involved in an incident that culminated from a series of events resulting from being deprived of my legal materials by the Property Officer who confiscated them due to a housing transfer to administrative segregation status days prior that had since been removed, disallowing me to retrieve the confiscated property, personal and legal materials alike. I demanded to speak to the supervisor, as I was placed on Administrative Segregation again because of a letter I had written to the then-property officer after his belligerent, unprofessional outburst days prior. I was denied and taunted by my pod officer, which led to me covering my cell window and remaining silent in civil protest. When officers are unable to confirm the wellness of a prisoner on their half-hour security rounds, e.g., visual inspection of each cell, they have to attempt to respond immediately. They can't successfully conduct a count, which occurs twice on each shift, without being able to see inside the cell. It was a tactful way to force a response that I anticipated would involve a supervisor. Excessive use-of-force ensued by the use of pepper spray beyond the manufacturer's recommendation, training, and situational necessity, as well as a failure to decontaminate. I was brought to the Special Management Unit and denied a shower for 3-days as I suffered the lingering effects of exposure to pepper spray without decontamination. I requested medical and mental health treatment. Most importantly, I filed grievances and exhausted administrative remedies available to me without relief. Subsequently, I devised a

plan of action that included seeking pro bono legal representation to file a civil suit for what I believed was an actionable claim of personal injury due to cruel and unusual punishment.

Unfortunately, and to my disappointment, many civil attorneys, law firms, and civil rights organizations are reluctant, if not unwilling, to pursue litigation against the Department of Corrections, which is a state agency, because the Office of the Attorney General is both their defenders, with unlimited resources, and influence. I had been declined by the A.C.L.U. on more than one occasion that I requested their legal representation. Coincidentally, and in an ironic, unpredictable change in fortune, one of my attorney allies left her owned private practice and joined the A.C.L.U. of Maine while I was pursuing retaining an attorney. I passionately explained my dilemma and disappointment with the A.C.L.U. and enlightened her that civil rights organizations for decades have fearlessly vindicated the civil rights of prisoners and have historically been the catalysts to criminal justice and prison reform, if not the trailblazers and shifters of paradigm and societal views as a result of their litigation efforts and successful judicial redress. I spoke vehemently about my belief that what happened to me had happened to others before me and would occur again to someone else. As a result, she convinced the legal director of the A.C.L.U. to take my case in 2017.

After discovery and pre-trial motions, we settled our multi-count federal civil suit in 2021, and mutually devised an agreeable litany of settlement terms consisting of monetary compensation, changes in existing policy and establishment of new ones; a non-disclosure agreement, and 3-years of mandatory reporting to a

Special Master, A.C.L.U. of Maine, and my attorneys. I really wanted to take it to trial, if for nothing but to expose the truth, but the Assistant Attorney General wanted to go to mediation. My attorneys informed me of the inherent challenges we'd face at the summary judgment phase that awaited. The defendants' legal defense was certain to include what's known as "Qualified Immunity"—an 11th Amendment protection that shields state and federal employees from civil liability unless they knowingly violate a constitutional right and clearly established law through unconscionable acts. I assessed the possibility of losing part, or all, of my claims and walking away with none of my desired outcomes. There were no clearly established laws throughout the First Circuit that paralleled my circumstances, which would require my attorneys and I to cogently argue the matter of first impression and use case law outside of the First Circuit.

Truth be told, as much as I am seen or applauded by others for my attributable skills or achievements by fellow prisoners and staff, and/or community leaders, advocates, or legislators and attorneys, I maintain gratitude and remain humbly thankful. I am not emboldened, nor satisfied by past accomplishments. The work is unfinished. There are many like me behind prison walls within the U.S. and across international waters. There are many prisoners, advocates of prisoners, and public officials whose efforts and achievements were the catalyst to what I've been able to do with success—I stand on their shoulders, and, the legacies built by their chiseling away of the mountain of injustices that plague America's criminal justice system.

On September 26, 2023, without notice, explanation, or an opportunity to pack my own property, I was transferred from the Maine State Prison to the Maine Correctional Center. I was anxious, confused, and upset at the fact that there were apparently discussions, if not meetings, where I was discussed and my fate decided without my knowledge, involvement, or input. That reality was aggravating, but lawful and supported by clearly established policy I'd soon learn. I knew that I was not entitled to an explanation of the reason for my being transferred, even after my transport was complete, but I pursued it anyway. Fortunately, I had met many inmates who had been to the facility, including two who, like myself, were high-profile, or a 'pretextually' determined administrative burden to manage, and deemed best suited for housing elsewhere by prison administrators and/or DOC officials. I was not in any trouble, nor had I been within that year. Upon my arrival, I asked every staff member of the prison who I believed may know why I was transferred. I received conflicting responses, or, outright refusal of a requested explanation. I abandoned pursuit of the reasoning because I grew to feel like "it is what it is" now. I continued to progress and figured out how to adjust and settle in my new environment. This was still the MDOC system, but with new staff, I had not built rapport with over the last decade. The "resident," Maine's proactive shift to responsible rehabilitative language, population at this recently renovated facility, where over one hundred women are also housed, is nice and small.

I had a homie who was transferred there less than six months earlier. He heard from the staff that I was there and spoke to me the same day that I arrived. I developed a routine and spent time in the library, either typing legal documents, or

on the law library computer. I had a couple of minor incidents and got through the acclimating and getting settled transition. Eventually, I would file a complaint for unethical conduct against a healthcare professional from the Maine State Prison and the two supervisors to the clinician based on supervisor liability. All three people were/are employed by the correctional vendor contracted to administer health care services & treatment for the state-wide resident population of MDOC. I dealt with the mailroom staff frequently for legal mail delivery and logging, as well as processing certified mail for my regular outgoing legal mail. I interacted and was unimpressed with the newly appointed unit manager, who had no background in Corrections prior to her becoming such. I also was not getting along with the facility Grievance Review Officer. The Grievance Review Officer – a Captain – declined my request to meet due to what I perceived, from his written reply, to be a misunderstanding. He refused to discuss the governing policy and its application, as well as his outlook and background. The Grievance Review Officer is essentially “the gatekeeper” of the prisoner’s access to the courts as a result of the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA requires the exhaustion of agency administrative remedies before civil action may be properly commenced). Our fundamental disagreements would end up in my filing an appeal of his improper dismissal of a grievance that I filed shortly after the implementation of a change in incoming mail processing. I had no idea that I would be transferred again within a few months. I ultimately moved to dismiss my own appeal as it became moot due to my transfer.

Once again, on January 11th, 2024, early in the morning, I was told to pack and transferred to the custody of Massachusetts. I was transported to the Souza Baranowski Correctional Center within hours. That morning, I was up at my usual 6 a.m. (before count time) and watching the morning news as I drank a cup of coffee. Suddenly, my cell door was opened, and two Special Operations Group officers were at my door with a roll of large plastic bags. I asked, “What was up?” and they told me to pack all my property up because I was being transferred. “What?!” ... “Again?!” I thought. When I followed their response with “Why” and “Where,” they replied in such a way that I could discern that it was fabricated, likely compelled by the standard protocol applicable to security surrounding the current circumstance. I was shocked, anxious, and confused. I started packing and trying to fathom the reason for my departure, which was perplexing because I hadn’t gotten into any trouble. I knew several individuals who had to be involved in this coordinated transaction, and the administrative decisions leading up to this event based on their job descriptions and purview. A couple of months earlier, an inmate who had recently received multiple sentences for a double-homicide conviction had been transferred to the Arizona Department of Corrections by the Prison Administration. I began to carry my personal property to the cart awaiting me as I wondered where I’d be going and what it would be like. Once we got to the booking area and collected all my property, including stored legal files and materials, I was told by the Director of security that they had been deliberately deflecting and not being candid, but that I was not going far. I assumed that implied one of the two neighboring states, but more than likely the state of

Massachusetts. Before the transport vehicle was out of the driveway, the transporting officers confirmed that I was being transported to Shirley, Massachusetts.

The entire ride alone was spent trying to solve the complicated mystery of “Why” it was decided for me to be transferred “out-of-state” and recalling the many details and information I’d gathered and heard over the past years about Massachusetts’s Prison System from the dozens of citizens from there who were incarcerated with me in different places in Maine. I concluded that this was retaliatory because I knew of a particular administrator who spoke about me to someone who ultimately shared it with me.

Another theory is that the MDOC had plans to transfer me prior, but waited until the final year of the 3-year mandatory reporting period required by our settlement agreement. Also, I am certain that the administrative decision to transfer me was influenced by the Wellpath Regional Director of Mental Behavioral Health and Assistant Director of Behavioral Health. There was a colluded effort to diverge the liability of my formerly assigned clinician at the Maine State Prison and Behavioral Health Director in an attempt to shield their supervisee from the accountability of my pending licensure complaints that stemmed from Wellpath Resident (inmate) Grievances concerning access to my mental health records, which she had lied to me about on several occasions, in addition to prior instances of dishonesty.

The exhaustion requirement remains a constant requisite for civil litigation, and, in that context, it required that I understood all of the formal and

informal contours of the healthcare service system. Inmate complaints about healthcare-related issues⁵ are addressed through the informal or formal resolution procedure of the grievance process, which is customarily within the control of the appointed healthcare administrators, e.g., Health Service Administrator, Director of Nursing, Clinical Operations Director, or Behavioral Health Director. I have often utilized this established mechanism to complain about delays in care and treatment, and to bring relevant issues to the attention of the appropriate healthcare supervisor having jurisdiction over the issue.

In Maine, whomever that administrative staff is, or a designee, typically will attempt to informally resolve the matter, and, if not, will give a written reason for no resolution and forward it to the Grievance Review Officer. The Grievance Review Officer has a predetermined amount of time to render a decision, which can be appealed to the Chief Administrative Officer (e.g., Warden or Superintendent). That decision may be appealed to the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections in Maine. Once the Commissioner's decision is finalized, the requirement of "exhaustion of administrative remedies" is satisfied. As a result, an inmate may file a civil suit pursuant to State and Federal laws (statutes) applicable to medical malpractice, professional negligence, unethical professional conduct, and other potential claims against a healthcare professional. I have filed four (4) of these types of complaints that are eminently reviewed at periodically scheduled meetings of Licensure Boards and are usually decided by them during a subsequently arranged hearing.

⁵ e.g., prescriptions and/or delivery of medication, medical supplies or medical equipment, or medical devices; access to medical, dental, optometry, physical therapy, or mental healthcare & treatment; staff misconduct; or perceived violations of any existing rights.

The Wellpath Regional Director of Behavioral Health for the State of Maine DOC formerly worked for the same company in the Massachusetts Department of Corrections, and remains a consultant for the Massachusetts DOC. That person has undeniable influence. I am convinced that this person is, at least, partially responsible for the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) decision to transfer me out of state. I had reasons to believe that she and her counterpart were complicit in violating my privacy/confidentiality rights. Consequently, I filed complaints with the Office of Professional and Occupational Regulation in the State of Maine. This governmental agency oversees dozens of licensure boards, to which they forward submitted complaints. I began the work on these complaints involving my formerly assigned clinician and her superiors.

CONCLUSION

Once I attain my higher educational goals in collegiate schooling, I intend to pursue paralegal certification via correspondence courses through an accredited vocational school. I recently researched the eligibility requirements and procedural guidelines for a lawful request for commutation by the State of Maine's Office of the Governor. I am eligible as I have served more than half of my sentence of 29 years for Elevated-Aggravated Assault. The procedural guidelines allow for consecutive requests for commutations to be filed one year following an issued denial. I intend to utilize this available process consecutively, every year, until I am released. Maine doesn't have parole any longer, as it was abolished 40+ years ago, although efforts for legislation to reinstate parole persist among allied supporters.

Additionally, Maine offers less statutory “good time” than the neighboring states of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, which have “double” the amount of available good time compared to Maine.⁶ For the past five-plus years, I have forged a rapport with legislators, as well as have invested time in and focused on criminal justice and prison reform bill proposals and legislation. I have worked on Prisoner Legislative Committees and with numerous legislators of Maine, including Speaker of the House – Rachel Talbot-Ross. With the anticipated earned good time, in addition to the nearly five years of total good time earned, I have approximately 6-8 years remaining of my sentence. Upon my release, I plan to create a non-profit organization with multiple branches in different cities whose objective will be Criminal Justice and Prison Reform.

Finally, I welcome commentary about this essay, questions, or any meaningful communication relative to the content herein. You may correspond via “snail mail” at the below mailing address and/or contact me via email messaging by setting up a FREE account on the Corrlinks website or app and then “adding me” as a contact (using the provided personal information below). The service is free of charge.

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⁶ Good time is basically credits of days off an inmate’s sentence earned through good conduct, work, and program participation and completion.