

DEMOCRATIC STEERING  
AND POLICY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

SUBCOMMITTEES:

CONSERVATION, CREDIT, ENERGY, AND RESEARCH

GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES AND  
RISK MANAGEMENT



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

DEBBIE HALVORSON

11TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

December 3, 2009

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEES:  
DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

HEALTH

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

SUBCOMMITTEES:  
FINANCE AND TAX

CONTRACTING AND TECHNOLOGY

The Honorable Jeffrey M. Schoenberg, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Richard P. Myers, Co-Chair  
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability  
703 Stratton Office Building  
Springfield, IL 62706



To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the 11th Congressional District of Illinois to express my opposition to the closure of the Kankakee Minimum Security Unit (KMSU).

The State of Illinois currently has an unemployment rate of 10.5%. In the area near the prison, Kankakee County's unemployment rate is 13.3% and Will County's is 9.9%. Cutting the 43 jobs at KMSU will exacerbate the region's unemployment and put further strain on state unemployment resources and local social service agencies.

It should also be noted that KMSU is the only female minimum security unit in the State of Illinois and a significant portion of the inmates are from the City of Chicago. KMSU's strategic location near Chicago is critical so the inmates can have regular contact with family and friends who aid in the reincorporation process. This closure could have a negative impact on the state's goal to reincorporate women back into society.

Thank you for your consideration on this issue. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff at (202) 225-3635.

Sincerely,

Debbie Halvorson  
Member of Congress

To whom it may concern,

I transferred from Decatur to Kankakee over a year ago because I was feeling down and there was not much for me to do at the time.

Since being here, I feel it has helped me so much to see around such positive people, not just inmates but staff as well.

Because it is so small here, when I need something or just need to talk, my Counselor and other staff are there for me.

I am thinking about joining the Wells program here, which would only take a day or two to get in, and if I was somewhere else it would take at least a year before I could get in, if not longer because of my outdate.

I would respectfully ask you not to close Kankakee.

Thank you  
Sharon Lavis

Senator Jeffrey Schoenberg  
Rep. Richard M. Meyer

In regards of the closing of KMSU  
or to remain open. I think it  
is vital to keep KMSU open.

Women need a minimum security  
prison in Illinois. The men have  
at least 10 ~~prison~~ prisons. Minimum  
security. Its not fair for minimum  
security women to be housed with  
max security women. to be threatened  
by inmates serving life sentences

The Wells treatment has been helpful  
to me in my recovery + rehabilitation  
I was assessed & put in the wells  
program my first week here. In other  
facilities there is a 6-12 month waiting  
list for people like myself here on  
a 3 year sentence, would not even be  
placed in treatment before my sentence  
was up. With this I think would  
only increase the risk of repeat  
offenders which the prisons are full  
of anyway

Sincerely  
Rebecca Thomas  
# R84894

12/5/09

To whom it May Concern,  
This facility is so convenient  
for my family members to  
visit. And this facility is  
also the only Womens Minimum  
Security prison. This is a  
very small facility and  
everything is so close, such  
as health care, CPR visiting  
and it don't take much  
for staff to monitor us,  
things are just steps away  
and that really helps  
some of the older ladies.  
It seems to me that the  
Men facilities get more options  
than women and just  
privately than women, and its  
not fair. I do appreciate KMSU  
and its staff. We women at K.M.S.U  
are content with where we are, so  
can you please consider not closing  
K.M.S.U.

Thank you  
Ms. Patricia E. ~~Ellis~~



Pamela Jefferson R35189

Dearest Committee:

If this facility closes it will be hard for the women in school and wells to continue their contract because wherever they get placed they will have to go on a waiting list to get back in their group and that will prolong them going home and that's not fair.

Then what about the ministries that comes to minister here if this place closes they will have to far to travel to see us and ~~when~~ we need our church and not only our church but what about our families that live in the city they have to travel to far if we get relocated at Decatur or Lincoln and my mother is of age and she can't travel that far and I have small kids that I would like to see.

Besides that we need a minimum security facility where there's less fights and quarrels here but who's to say in the other facilities because they're either maximum or medium and too many harmful things go on in other facilities so please do not close our facility. Thank you very much.

Dec 5, 2009

Greetings Committee:

In my opinion this facility should not be closed because for me being a older offender with a disability it is easier to reach different destinations without being tired such as chow hall, health care, library and the chapel.

It is much quieter here for me and I appreciate this facility and staff. It is much better for my health at K.M.S.U. and so I pray that you decide not to terminate this facility.

Respectfully

Phyllis Wansley

N17169

To Whom it may concern ;

12-6-09

It is important to me that Kankakee Minimum Security Unit stays open so I can continue my incarceration here. I am currently in Wells and hoping to take many life lessons that I have learned home with me. KMSU is close to home, so it is easier for my family to visit me. Also KMSU is minimum security so it doesn't look so much like 'prison' to my six year old. And I don't think it will be fair to us, low security offenders, to be housed in a medium or max prison. I really hope I can continue to attend Wells and finish my sentence at KMSU. Please let KMSU stay open.

Thank You  
Jamie Forbes  
R80991

December, 2009

SENATOR JEFFREY SCHOENBERG  
REPRESENTATIVE RICHARD MEYERS

I AM WRITING TO YOU REGARDING THE POTENTIAL CLOSURE OF KANKAKEE MINIMAL SECURITY UNIT PRISON (KMSU) AND AM RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THAT YOU CONSIDER THE SEVERAL ISSUES OUTLINED IN THIS CORRESPONDENCE WHEN EVALUATING THE VALUE OF KEEPING THE FACILITY IN OPERATION.

IN JULY 2009, I WAS SENTENCED TO A THREE YEAR PERIOD OF INCARCERATION AS A CONSEQUENCE OF A CLASS II FELONY CONVICTION FOR DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL AND DAMAGING A NEIGHBOR'S GARAGE. AS A 55 YEAR OLD WOMAN DEEMED SUCCESSFUL BY TRADITIONAL STANDARDS INCLUDING BEING A SINGLE MOTHER AND HOME OWNER WITH AN EXCELLENT CREDIT RATING AS WELL AS A GRADUATE EDUCATED CARDIAC PHYSIOLOGIST, RESEARCHER AND NURSE, I WAS OBVIOUSLY DEVASTATED BY THIS DECISION. WITH MUCH TREPIDATION AND FEAR, I ENTERED THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (IDOC) INTAKE SYSTEM AT DWIGHT CORRECTIONAL CENTER (DCC) FOR PROCESSING AND CLASSIFICATION TO DETERMINE THE PRISON TO WHICH I WOULD BE ASSIGNED.

For 34 days, I was housed for nearly 24 hours a day in a small, high security cell with another offender who openly discussed her conviction for the stabbing homicide of her daughter's love interest. During this period, this woman refused to allow me to sleep in my assigned bunk, kept the lights off except during mandated count checks, experienced frequent bouts of vomiting and wretching and routinely addressed me using racially provoked language.

I tolerated these conditions out of pure fear.

When my classification was finally complete, I was informed that I would be transferred to KMSU, the only minimal security level prison for women in the state. I felt great solace and relief in knowing that, unlike my experience at DEC, I would at least be confined with other offenders convicted of non-violent crimes and that, as such, the environment would be safer, less threatening and not as restrictive.

There are multiple reasons beyond the obvious issue of safety that likewise reinforce why I feel to close KMSU would be detrimental.

→ WELLS (Women Encouraging Life-Long Sobriety) Program  
Accessibility

The majority of women housed at KMSU like myself suffer from an addiction to alcohol and/or drugs regardless of the nature of their conviction. Although WDOE makes the WELLS program for the treatment of these addictions accessible at all of its facilities, the waiting lists are extensive and thus the time to enter the program is often prolonged. As such, the shorter sentence offenders like myself might well never get admitted to the program before discharge. At KMSU, due to the small number of residents, desired and necessary treatment is immediately available, the counselor's approach can be more focused and individualized and participation can be continued for the duration of time it is felt to be beneficial.

→ EQUAL Gender Opportunity

Although there are considerably less female prisoners than males incarcerated in the state, KMSU is the single dedicated level seven minimum security institution for females. In addition, there is only one Adult Transitional Treatment Center supporting the work release program for women. In the event that it should be deemed necessary to close a facility, it would seem prudent that one of the many male designated housing units be considered to avoid discrimination.



## → REUNIFICATION

It is essential to the healthy recovery of the offenders and their successful return to society that they maintain ties with their family and social support system.

The majority of women at KMSU live in the Chicago and area. KMSU is in much closer proximity than the medium security prisons to which inmates would need to be transferred in the event of a closure. The proximity facilitates frequent visitation in an environment that fosters a degree of comfort to children and loved ones because of the open atmosphere of the visiting area and the absence of wire fences on the grounds. I have had visits twice a week since my incarceration which has kept me grounded, minimized my stress and helped me maintain a positive attitude.

## → RECIDIVISM RATE

The obvious goal of incarceration is to promote recognition of the severity of violating the law and to establish the desire for a reformed lifestyle upon release. At KMSU, the offenders are generally exposed to women with no prior history of incarceration who share similar problems and mutual goals for recovery. There is a common desire to be respectful of authority, compliant with the rules and regulations and dedicated

to a productive return to society. Individuals are encouraged to anticipate and prepare for their discharge not to fear that it might be jeopardized by a fellow inmate serving a longer sentence. Consequently, it is much less likely that women leaving KMSU will commit another offense but instead will transition to a healthier, goal oriented lifestyle.

In summary, regardless of the institution, the prison experience is overwhelmingly difficult. However, I truly believe that the benefits of the small, minimal security Kankakee facility to the offenders' well being and outlook are numerous. I sincerely hope these non-monetary oriented issues will be weighed and considered when making the final closure determination.

Respectfully

Elaine L. Enjoc (R84760)  
125 E. Hillside Ave  
Barrington IL 60010

12/3/09

Attention State Legislature,  
Shoenberg

It has come to my attention that there is a possibility that the WELLS program at Saukagee MSU is being considered for closure. I would like to dissuade this from happening by presenting some important points to you concerning this issue. First of all I find it to be extremely important for there to be an outlet for change among the incarcerated women here otherwise the recidivism rate will be increased, wasting numerous energies, monies, lives, children's lives, society's powers etc. It is of utmost importance that women in prison receive an outlet for change, otherwise prison will only serve ~~to~~ as a holding place for future criminals. As well as future criminals children. Much of the crimes committed by the women here center around addiction. It is very important to allow the women here to conquer their addictions and to never return. The WELLS program is only the beginning of this, and even more is needed. Women ~~need~~ that are incarcerated need to learn how to tolerate the pain in the mind, body and soul in order to alleviate their addiction. Sincerely, Elizabeth  
Loveless

To whom this concerns,

Senator Schoenberg

This is what I'm asking.

I'm an inmate at KMSU.

I'm asking not to close.

This is our only chance to  
work the program longer than 6 mos.

And I'm working on my GED.

In any other prisons there's a  
waiting list. And I'm a short

timer and at low risk. And so

is all the women here. We all

have a chance here at KMSU

to go out and change our life.

The counselor's here take time

for us and really help us out.

Also my school teacher helps

us pass our GED. I can't see

us get shipped out and not be able

to go to a group of well's and

or school. So be able to better

ourselves. Us short timers

need a chance as well.

It does make a difference for

us. So please keep KMSU open.

Angela Lewis

Yolanda Mitchell  
#R84396

Senator Schoenberg

12-3-09

To whom it may concern, I would like to express my feelings regarding the Wells program at KMSU, as well as KMSU prison. I feel that both should stay open for the benefit of the women here and the treatment that is received. A lot of women are in treatment for the first time and they need and want the help that they receive from the counselors in the Wells program. We learn a lot about our addiction and the problems we have in our lives. We learn about coping skills and watch tapes that help us to deal with our lives and family when we go home. I feel that every prison that is open should have a treatment center for the simple fact that a lot of people are in jail due to drug use of some kind. The ladies here at KMSU are a small community that have a bond and it is easier for family members to come to visit at anytime.

Sincerely, Yolanda Mitchell

12/3/09

To Whom it may concern: <sup>Senator</sup> Schoenberg

My name is Cintya a detainee at RMUS. This institution has been a major part of my healing and recovery process.

By attending parenting and Wells we have the tools needed to stay out of prison. Closing this institution would only assist in tearing down the women's process.

I hope you take into consideration all the concerns of all parties involved

Kind regards

Cintya Howard

B21616



Senator Schroerberg,  
To whom it may concern, State  
Legislator.

I truly believe this place is  
a beneficial place for offenders to  
come serve their time, whether  
it be a long time or short  
time. This place is close to a lot  
of our families, which is extremely  
helpful. Being in the Wells program  
has really helped me cope with  
my drug use, my negative  
attitude towards people, places and  
things. I'm a new changed person  
honestly after 6 months and  
4 days in court. I've learned  
how to deal with any situation  
that is brought in front of me.  
So please keep KMSU open so  
that other ladies are fortunate  
to have the experience to get some  
good help with their issues, no  
matter what it is.

Thank you  
Kayla Jackson  
12/3/09

12/3/09

Attention: State Legislator

Senator Schoenberg

To whom it may concern,  
I am writing this letter, on behalf  
of the Wells Karkakee program.  
During my incarceration here  
at Karkakee, and in the Wells  
program, I have learned and I am  
still learning how to cope with life  
without drugs & alcohol beyond these  
walls. We are getting the tools we  
need to prevent recidivism here  
at the Karkakee Wells program.  
The small class rooms allow  
us to receive the counseling we  
need as individuals as well as  
allows for one on one counseling. This  
facility and program is a definite  
positive experience and is instrumental  
in my recovery. The classes at Karkakee  
allows me to stay connected with my  
family which also assist with my  
rehabilitation. Please keep Karkakee & the  
Wells program active. Sincerely,  
Joyce Pierce

DEC. 6, 2009

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I AM ~~A~~ NEW TO KANKAKEE. I HAVE JUST ARRIVED ON NOVEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup> 2009. I FEEL THAT THIS PRISON SHALL REMAIN OPEN BECAUSE I HAVE JUST APPLIED FOR WELLS AND AM ANXIOUS TO CONTINUE MY TREATMENT.

I ENJOY THIS FACILITY BECAUSE IT IS SMALL AND CLOSE TO MY FAMILY. THERE ARE NO ARGUMENTS OR FIGHTS HERE, EVERYONE GETS ALONG GOOD.

I ENJOY THE FOOD AND THE FACT THAT WE HAVE REAL WATER HERE. WITH THIS BEING MY FIRST TIME IN PRISON, I HAVE FINALLY ADJUSTED TO IT HERE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION.

SINCERELY,

ERIN KENNEDY  
R85203

12-6-09

To whom it may concern.  
This is a few lines to give my opinions  
on keeping K.M.S.U. open. I think  
this is a good place for people who  
are not hardened criminals to have a  
chance to pull themselves together with-  
out having to deal with the more  
rougher element. you have a better  
chance to contemplate on the things  
you have done wrong and try to do  
better.

By it being a smaller  
place it is better for us older woman.  
I dont have a lot of fancy words to  
express myself but I think keeping  
K.M.S.U open would be a very  
good thing to do.

Yours Truly  
Marie Hartly  
R82058

To whom it may concern,

My name is Tara Hopkins. I'm writing because of my concern of the state closing down this facility (K.M.S.U) we have a drug program here that's call wells, it help us women's to prepare to live a better life drug free if this facility close it will take the women a while to get back in the program when Relocated, they also have education classes doing my stay here I have accomplish my G.E.D. they have ministries that come out here everyday of the week, we appreciate them for taking there time out to come and minister to us. If my family would like to see me the destination is easier to reach from Chicago. This facility have a lot to offer and it help us to begin to live a better life, I would really appreciate if you would consider keeping this facility open.

Thank you  
Tara Hopkins

12-6-09

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jonia Marshall # R83929 and I am an inmate at KMSU. I am truly concerned & literally frightened at the fact that this facility may be closing. Women have fought to have a minimum security prison and now you want to take it away from us. Many of the women here as well as myself also find it to be very convenient for our families to visit us here & if this is closed our visit will be few and far between. The back & forth travel alone would take a toll on our families. My visits mean the world to me it's what keeps me going everyday. It states in our manual that "the visitation program is viewed as a very important part of the offender's program while here". It allows us to reconnect and spend time with our loved ones. Me personally, I have 2 visits a week (the max) and my family has made sure that they are here with bells on from the time visiting hours begin until they end.



Unlike the horror stories we hear about what's going on at other facilities, I can genuinely say I feel safe here. The staff is pleasant most times and they make sure we are safe. The women here were chosen to do their time at this facility for a reason: We Pose No Threat To Anyone or Ourselves.

I ask that you consider our request and keep this facility open for the present & future women at KMSU. Women are always the last to be considered for anything. So this letter is a heartfelt plea from me and the women at KMSU.

Please Keep This Place Open.

Sincerely  
Joria Marshall  
#R83929

To Whom it may concern Dec 3, 2009  
~~the~~ Senator Schoenberg

My name is Karen Flowers  
I am a offender at KMSU  
prison. I came to KMSU  
in July of 2009, I have seen  
women prison on T.V where  
there are fences around  
the prison with locks  
on them. To be in a prison  
where there are not fences  
that are locks on them.  
Here at KMSU you dont feel  
like a prisoner, And being  
here has help me with  
a lot of things, such as  
being in the (Wells) drug  
recovery programs has helped  
me so much with things  
like being more spiritual  
talking in front of people  
who are in situation i am  
in, I have learn about  
how the different drugs  
that people have use can  
kill you, Also closing down  
Kankatee Minimum Security Unit  
TURN OVER

Is not a good thing for  
my family who are only  
1 hour away. I haven't seen  
them in 6 months. I have  
a 14 year old daughter  
who father is dead. I  
am so upset about this  
closing that I am stressing  
and starting get angry again.  
I am going to school to get  
my G.E.D so I can go to  
College and get a Degree in  
Drug Counseling to help  
everyone ~~on~~ that I can  
that is on drugs. In  
closing (Please) Please  
Keep KMSU open for  
us that really need this  
place that has really help  
me. By the way I am 51 years  
old.

Yours Truly  
Karen Howers

To Whom This may concern ;

In my opinion Kankakee should remain open! There are people like me who would benefit from it. This is my first time ever being in prison, I thank God for Kankakee every day. It is jail - yes, but while being here, I've got to know myself. The reason I have got to know myself is because of Kankakee and what they have to offer.

I can reach out to people that are like me, who at some point has made a wrong decision. But, just because we made a bad decision don't mean we deserve less of a place. This is minimum security prison, I have learned a lot in here as far as school and church ministries. Because of the staff and inmates housed here I feel safe enough to concentrate on my GED, and coming closer to God so, that I may change my way of thinking.

This experience has been a rough one, but thankfully, Kankakee was here. It keeps me in the right frame of mind, to know that what I did was wrong, but it didn't make me any less of a person. I was not housed with murders and for that I was not scared for my

life, nor was my children.

Thankfully my Children got a chance to come and see me that this place wasn't far enough out that they couldn't drive to come see me. They were safe when they got here and didn't worry too much about me. They knew I felt safe.

I was also comfortable knowing my kids could come and see me here and it would not scare them to see their mother in jail.

Because, of Kankakee and what programs they offer I am getting my GED and learning to walk with God. It has given me the willingness to change my life and be a better person. It has given me the strength to be myself and stand strong in order to go forward in my life.

Thank You..

Lisa Hensley  
-R85117-

TO who this may concern

It would be good to keep  
k.m.s.u open for the women  
here that have there family  
that come<sup>to</sup> see them because  
it is closer\* for them to drive.

We also need a prison that  
is a minimum security unit.

I can say for my self that  
it is easier for me to get  
around with being a slow  
walker. And what if you  
decide to close what will  
happen to the people that  
are in wells getting treatment  
and the rest of us since we  
all are minimum security. I  
hope you concern this letter  
and keep k.m.s.u open not



just for the ~~offend~~ inmates  
here but also for the staff.

thank you so much  
April Jeff R78021

Dec 6, 2009

To whom it may concern,  
- I'm an inmate at K.M.S.U.  
I don't think K.M.S.U. should  
be closed down because this  
place has help a lot of women  
go back in the world and  
get good jobs and be better  
parents. While there here  
some family can come to  
visit and bring the baby.  
Because its not a problem  
getting here as it would be  
getting to Dwight or any  
other place. This place is a  
lots closer. Its a lot cleaner.  
There are a lots of older  
women here that can't get  
around much. The Chow  
hall are a lots closer. Health  
care and the Chapel are a  
short walk. My legs are not  
as strong as they use to be.  
And I thank God for this  
place and I pray that it stays

open. Different ministries  
come out to ministry to us  
that otherwise we would  
not know about. We really  
need this place. It may not  
have ~~no~~ importance to you. But  
it means the world to us.  
And even if it is a prison  
it is still home to us for now.  
Please don't close it down  
we need it we can't deal  
with the young ones that  
are coming to prison these  
days. Save our prisons

I thank You  
Linda Brazier  
B49813

12/7/09

To Whom it may concern;

I am an inmate at the Kankakee Minimum Security Unit. I am writing this letter in regards ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> the topic of closing this place down.

For women like us, this place is perfect. True we have felony offenders but they are petty compared to women in the other prisons. Many consider it a privilege to be here. We are allowed to have recreation twice a day. We have movies twice a month. The atmosphere around here, though there may be an occasional argument, there is never any violence. The inmates don't disrespect the officers. Not to mention, the women in treatment are allowed to get the personal attention they need in order to deal with their problems they have. We are allowed the opportunity to use the phone all day. As well as have our friends & loved ones come visit any day of the week.

On the other hand, it's still strict enough that we know we're behind

hours. We must follow the officers' orders. We must sign out & get called out whenever we go anywhere. Not only that but we all have either 1 or 2 assignments to help keep this place clean & functioning. There's no such thing as sleeping all day.

This place also allows you plenty of opportunity to go to church. This is good since religion helps to make people do what is right. They get more understanding about what they must do to act right when they get back in society.

By keeping this place open, women are given many chances & opportunities they would normally never receive. They make friends that encourage them to do better so they don't return.

Please consider keeping this place open so other women can learn just what a blessing it is to come to Kaukahee. They don't deserve staying in Dwight or going to Lincoln. They're not hardcore criminals.

Sincerely yours,  
a concerned inmate.

Senator Jeffrey Schoenberg, Representative Meyers

I am writing this letter in regards to closing Hankakee Minimum Security Unit. I made a mistake and ended up in prison, but I am thankful that I got transferred here. My family only lives 32 miles away so I get visits from them every weekend. If I got transferred down state I will never get to see them. I have three young children that didn't even know this was a prison because there are no fences.

The women here are all level 7 minimum security which means we have no violent crimes in our backgrounds. At the other prisons like Dwight, Lincoln, and Decatur there are murderers and rapists. Why should we have to serve our time with these women?

When I came here I signed up for Wells treatment and

GED class, by the fifth day I was enrolled in those classes. The waiting list at the other prisons are extremely long, and there's a good chance we won't get the treatment we need before our sentence is up.

I had to stay in Dwight prison for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days when I went to take my GED test, it was the worst experience ever. I can actually say that I was scared, there were inmates yelling and fighting, and my roommate was in prison for life for killing her husband. They have no respect for other inmates or the officers. I had to have my guard up at all times.

I did get my GED which cuts sixty days off my sentence, which in turn saved the state money. I believe if I was at one of the other prisons, I

would have never got a chance to obtain my GED. We are close enough to Dwight to utilize their Dr. and nurse so we don't need our own medical staff here, therefore saving money.

There are thirteen minimum security prison for men, and we only have one. Why would you want to take that away from us? I believe that this prison has done nothing but better my life.

Sincerely yours,  
Sarah Raff  
R84793  
12/4/09



70% Senator Jeffrey Schoenberg and Rep Richard Meyers  
I am a minimum security offender, who has never  
committed a violent crime against another person.

I fear for my safety if I have to go and be transferred  
to a medium security prison.

I went to Dwight Correctional Center to take my G.E.D.  
in November 2009, which I passed

I was there for a total of three days and the conditions  
were unbearable. The correctional officer didn't know  
why I was there, the inmates were constantly arguing  
and swearing at each other. then they intimidated  
me so I could use the washroom for hours. I was  
around women who were classified minimum security  
but had murdered their own children or another  
adult, I feared for my safety

While at Kankakee Minimum Security Unit we are  
not allowed to behave in that manner. We are not  
allowed to use profanity or disrespect our fellow inmates  
or staff. Kankakee is more than just a facility that houses  
us. It is a place that teaches self respect, raises our self  
esteem, also it is family oriented. so when your children  
come they are more relaxed. Your family likes the  
idea of no fences. I have 4 children of my own 3 boys  
ages 18, 12, 11 years old and my daughter is 4 years. I am  
about an hour away from my home, so it is easy for my  
mother to bring my children to visit me.

If I am sent to live in Decatur or Lincoln I won't see my kids until I am released which is an about a year. I am paying my debt to society for what I was accused of, but please don't make my children suffer more than they already are.

Then there is the Wells program, which about 50 women need and depend on to stay sober when released. In other facilities this program has such a long waiting list its about 14 months, make it almost impossible to sign up for. This is a wonderful program for women in recovery, we need it.

So as you can see Kankakee is a great Rehabilitation Center, it makes a way for us women to become productive citizens upon our release.

So please Sirs I ask that you keep our minimum security unit open. If not for us women offenders then for the sake of our children.

Thank you for your time and Consideration

Sincerely  
Kelly Bryers  
R84980

To whom it may concern

My name is Melissa Calderon I'm  
a 38 yr old mother of two sons  
my oldest son Jose is 11 yrs old,  
my youngest Miguel is 6 yrs old.

In Jan 2004, I was sentence  
to 12 yrs in prison for Drug  
Conspiracy. During the process  
in litate I was hoping to  
come to KMSU, but I was  
transferred downstate 3 hrs  
away to Lincoln C.C. which  
is a medium facility. I  
really couldn't understand  
when it was minimum. My  
concern are my children.  
I have a good mother  
having opportunities to be  
part of my children life.  
Visits is a number one  
priority. KMSU is the way from  
Chicago, my children come  
here to visit and once  
they arrive they see the  
→

difference between here and  
Lincoln. They come through  
one door and the right  
there with open arms.

Am in the process of getting  
my BED. I usually have  
one on one with my teacher  
if I can't comprehend to my  
work at Lincoln, there was  
never one on one. Also,  
here at KMSU, you have  
more privacy, you in the  
room with one other person  
not 19 other females, you bath  
by yourself, not with 5 other  
girls.

The food here is 100% better.  
For being a prison we eat  
real good.

Thank you for a opportunity  
of letting my counselor bring  
my letter in and reading  
it.

Melissa Calderon

To whom it may concern.

I Rhonda Yambick write this letter to you about the importance of K, M, S, U, this is the only female minimum security unit prison, even though we've committed a crime, why should we have to be subjected to do our time with prisoners that has nothing to lose. (it scares me to think about it).

K, M, S, U is so close to home i feel like my family is around the corner, also it's much easier for the families of the inmates that live close by to come and visit once, twice, even three times a week, seeing your loved ones makes doing your time a little at ease.

Our staff members are very professional even though their hard times they still find a way to meet our needs, give a kind word, or just console us when we need to be.

So I ask you or whom else  
is in charge to have good  
intentions in what you do.

Please don't take the MSU  
away from us nor the  
women to come.

Thank you  
god bless you all

Appendix  
Fambriek  
R36977

Happy Holidays

December 5, 2009

Re: Closing of K.M.S.U.  
Kanakree Minimum Security Unit

To Whom it May Concern;


Let me start first by thanking you for reading my letter. Before writing this letter today, I stopped first to pray, and that is what has given me the strength and words to put forth the effort.

Honestly speaking when it was mention about the possible closing of this prison KMSU I given it no thought being a first time offender you really don't know what to do nor think cause it's your first time of course. What goes through your mind is early release!

But reality set in and today I have come to realize that the past six (6) months of being here at KMSU has been a big help for me and issues that I have never

been able to deal with before. Truly location plays a big part in correction and of course here at KMSU it is easier to focus and think out your problems while doing your time without being harassed by other prisoners due to the population being low. Everyone knows the cycle we as prisoners has broken the law and now we face the consequence. Yet almost invariably, we as prisoners could fall into undesirable behavior by being mixed with maximum security prisoners of course that could be the start of a frustrating process.

This experience of the change in closing KMSU prison has left us feeling powerless.

  
EVELYN ROBINSON  
R 84480



To: Senator Jeffrey Schoenberg  
Rep. Richard Meyers

I am incarcerated here at KMSU, because of I mistake I've made in my life, I'm writing because of the possibility of KMSU closing. This is my first time being in Prison, when I went through the X-house in Dwight I was terrified even though this was just the central intake, but just the thought of having to be in that prison for all my time was scary. There should be a prison for minimum security women, we shouldn't have to be housed with women that have murdered if all we did was write a bad check this could possibly lead to ~~an~~ psychological damage to a person. I was so worried about whether I was going to be able to get treatment because I heard there was waiting lists, when I got to KMSU I signed up as soon as I got here and a few days later I was already in group. Which was great for me.

I don't have anyone, but my kids that live here in Illinois all my other family live in Oklahoma. KMSU is only not even an hour away from here, If I was to go to another place like Lincoln or Decatur I wouldn't be able to see them.

I believe that if I wouldn't have come here to KMSU I wouldn't have been able to be in treatment as fast or wouldn't be able to <sup>see</sup> my kids, which would just have made my time harder then it already is being locked up is hard enough.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Hunt  
R84612

12-4-09

12-3-09

Dear Senator Jeffrey Schoenberg / Rep. Richard Meyers

I'm writing you regarding Kankakee Minimum Security Unit

This prison is the only Minimum prison for women

that holds only Minimum class offenders with

no violent crime. This facility needs to stay

open. The men have 7 minimum prisons for

the men. Why take our only Minimum

prison away from the women. We benefit

a lot from this facility. The Reunification

Program helps me communicate with my family

and it is close to Chicago where my family

lives. It is convenient for my family

to visit me. I have 5 children and

the youngest is 1 year old. You would

be hurting my children because they won't

be able to come if I move. It would be

to far. Wells Substance programs helps me

stay clean and sober and it provides me with

the tools I need to stay clean and sober when

I'm discharged. I get days from the wells

program and it puts me out Three Months

early. My outdate will be May 14, 2010

With the wells program. Other  
Prison have a long waiting list  
at least 1 year. My family is expecting  
me to get out May 14, 2010. With  
my contracts. You will be disappointing  
my children & family. This program  
offers a lot and ~~to~~ attend school  
to help me further my education and  
I get one on one help from  
wells, school, counselor and  
this would be a terrible disaster to close  
a wonderful place that helps women  
to become better and gives you ~~the~~ P. Edwards  
and tools to keep you from coming back.  
Also you are saving money because we  
share medical services with Dwight and  
the Shattie takes us over there for all  
of our medical and it is close by  
Dwight. You will be hurting, not just  
me you would be hurting my children  
by closing this prison.

Thank you  
Respectfully,  
Patsy Edwards  
R83676 Kmsu

Marlena Portnoy  
12/3/09

To Whom This May Concern: <sup>ALL Illinois Legislators</sup> (Senator Schoenberg & Rep. Richard Myers)

I, Marlena Portnoy truly believe that Kankakee Minimum Security Unit should stay open because it is the only female facility focusing on minimum security women and closest (in distance) to Chicago. It is imperative to keep a healthy relationship with my children and family while I'm incarcerated. It improves my bonds between my children and myself. It is also the only female minimum security unit in Illinois. Without KMSU, I would be placed in a medium/maximum security prison which is located 3-4 hours away from my family/loved ones.

As for the Wells Program, I believe it is imperative to offer this program at KMSU for the women who have a drug and/or alcohol addiction. The Wells Program is a therapeutic community which encourages women to live in balance and reach our recovery goals. I've learned so much about myself and my addiction through the Wells Program through individual and group counseling. I believe I would continue to "use" if it were not for the tools I learned in the Wells Program. The counselors are very knowledgeable and helpful in my recovery and has made me a better person within myself. I'm taking one day at a time as a clean, sober woman with the help

of KMSU/wells program. Thank you for allowing  
KMSU to stay open for the women who need help  
with their addictions. God Bless you.

Sincerely,

Martena Portney

12/3/09

Dear Senator Schoenberg and Rep. Richard Myers

I am writing to you in regards to the closing of Kankekee minimum security prison. I've been here about two weeks, and am in my third day of treatment. Anyhow I am 45 years old, have never been in prison or any treatment program for that matter. I'm hearing it may close due to lack of funding, which would leave maximum and medium prisons only. From what I'm told if this facility were to close and I would be transferred I would have to wait anywhere from eight to ~~four~~ fourteen months to get into a treatment program.

Some of us could be released before then, and therefore wouldn't have the chance for treatment. In my situation if this place closes then I would wait a year for treatment and on rehabilitating myself.

Another point to consider is putting minimum security in with maximum security is not a good idea. Most of us here are first time offenders, why would you want to put us in with maximum security offenders?

To save money I am told, I would think that our representatives + government people can surely find another resource

or budget to cut to save money.

We do understand that we have made a serious mistake but I do believe everyone is entitled to a second chance. And that's what Kankakee State Prison is about, second chances. I would guess most of the offenders in a maximum prison have been here two, three and four times.

I am asking that you think twice about closing the only minimum security prison for women. I just found out the men have seven seems a bit discriminating to me. All us women are asking for is a chance to better our life while we are incarcerated with programs that are offered to us. Please find other avenues to cut the budget on, after all this is peoples lives we are talking about.

I'm positive if you all in our government put your heads together you can come up with another plan.

Thank-you for your time  
Denise Mandell R85173



Dec 3 2009

Senator Jeffrey Schoenberg  
Rep. Richard Meyers

Dear Committee:

I, San Juanita Avelles R83427 am  
currently an inmate resident of KMSU  
since September 2008 and my out date  
is October 2011. KMSU is a Minimum Security  
Facility  
These are Key Points

- Security Level - I am not in danger at KMSU or brought into other messes that could cause me to have more time because of Security levels & Threatening situations in a medium or Maximum you guard yourself at all times and awareness skills must be up and in tune at all times if you are to survive the time incarcerated.
- Reunification - Seeing family more. KMSU Excellent Visiting time & Visitors relax and enjoy visit with me. Brings family closer together and makes

re-entry into society much much easier. Visitors come more because atmosphere is not Threatening or Violent.

Wells Treatment — being a better member of society and allows me to leave early, cutting State's cost.

Cutting Other Cost — Why are programs not out for Lifers (people doing life) They are not going to be released so why do they need extra programs when these people/inmates are not being released into society ever. They do not need these benefits.

These are my views, Thank you for your time on this very important manner. KMSU is the only women's Minimum Security Facility.

Respectfully,

San Juanita Arellano  
R83427

Current Inmate at KMSU.

Dec 4<sup>th</sup> 2009

To:

Rep. Richard Myers

Dear Mr. Myers,

I am writing to you in regards to the closing of Kankakee minimum Security Unit. I am currently a resident here at KMSU. I transferred here to KMSU from Decatur per my request last Sept. 2008. The reason for my transfer was due to the fact that I have a 5yr. old daughter who I was only able to see once in 6 months because Decatur was too far for my family to travel. Since being here at KMSU I am able to see and visit with my daughter every weekend. Being able to have that bond with her has had a positive influence on myself and my recovery. Which leads me to another reason why I believe KMSU should remain open, I'm currently in the "Wells" program. This program has helped me tremendously. I have learned so much. It has helped me become a better person. I've worked →

on Self esteem, anger, relapse prevention,  
parenting and how to go back into  
Society a Clean and sober productive  
member. Also KMSU is the closest minimum  
Security Unit from Cook County, where  
the majority of women here reside. So  
you can clearly see why KMSU remaining  
open is imparitive to my recovery and  
my family bond. Taking all this away  
would be detrimental in all aspects.

I ask that you please help us keep  
KMSU's doors open, not only for myself  
but for the women who come after me.

Thank you for your time  
and consideration,  
Jennifer Vega  
R78073

10% Senator Shoenberg, Richard Myers, and the Illinois Legislators.

To Whom it may Concern,

12-7-09

My name is Laura Swenson and I am an inmate at the Kankakee Minimum Security Unit, where I've been since May 20, 2009. I consider myself lucky to be here at KMSU, because I'm only an hour from my children and grandchildren who I enjoy seeing on a regular basis. While I was housed in Decatur, visits were prohibitive due to the distance. Four (4) hours each way with a baby on a heart monitor isn't healthy or safe. I finally got to meet my young grandchild when I got transferred to Kankakee. I still have 32 months to serve - If KMSU is closed, that's 32 months of not being able to see or speak to my family.

Another worry of mine is, if KMSU is closed, where we will end up. Dwight? A C/O there told me there are no empty beds. Besides that, the idea of being housed with Maximum Security inmates - many of which will never leave thru the gates of Dwight, scares me. These ladies have nothing to lose, and don't care if they take me down that road with them. I spent 3 months in Dwight, Nov 26, 2008 - Jan 29, 2009 and again May 11 - 2009 to May 20, 2009. I was stolen from, antagonized, and spent my time

in fear for my safety. This is not conducive to my treatment and rehabilitation.

On KMSU, I am in the Wells treatment program, where I have recently signed my 4<sup>th</sup> contract. On Dwight, having more than 24 months to serve is a block against getting into the Wells program. The waiting list for those with less than 24 months is 6 mos - 12 mos - My treatment would come to a dead stop.

Please, keep KMSU open - There are too many ladies who can and will benefit from the location and programs available at KMSU.

Sincerely  
Laura J. Anderson  
R35617

## To Whom it May Concern

My name is Jarice Brown. On August 27, 2009 I was sentenced to 2 years. I was very scared as I had never been to jail before. When I arrived in Dwight I was even more scared and really wanted to have a mental breakdown. There were a lot of females that were loud, cussing at the guards, hollering to other inmates at the window. It almost seemed like in the middle of the night we were at the zoo. I was in Dwight for 14 days. It may not seem like long, but it felt like an eternity. When I was transferred to Kankakee it was all so much quieter. The guards did not have to yell at the top of their lungs to get your attention. The inmates were way more friendly and calm. There were no arguments ~~between~~ between inmates almost leading to fights. Everyone's crime was non-violent and almost everyone was focused on how to make it through the day.

I must say that being in Kankakee I worried less about my safety and more about my rehabilitation and freedom. Here at Kankakee the guards are all more caring

and willing to listen and understand. As opposed to Dwight they wouldn't even stop to answer a question. They always yelled and said put a slip in the box and maybe they will get to it before they leave. Being classified as minimum security inmate I think and feel that this minimum facility should stay open, to keep us separated. This minimum facility feels safe and make us feel that way at all times. Please don't mix us with medium and max inmates where we could get lost in the shuffle.

Thank you

Jaiice Brown  
#84941



12-6-09

To those considering the closing of Kankakee  
Minimum Security Prison,

I am currently an offender residing in  
Kankakee until my outdate of December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009.  
I am serving <sup>four</sup> years of my nine year sentence.  
The first two and a half years of my time was  
spent in Dwight C.C. until I was finally approved  
to transfer to Kankakee. I'm ineligible to transfer  
to Lincoln or Decatur so Kankakee was my  
only option.

The contrast between Dwight and Kankakee  
is immeasurable. For example, as I write  
this on Sunday, I know I will give it directly  
to my counselor, Ms. Boeckmann on Monday  
for this meeting you are having on Tuesday.  
You see, in Dwight, as well as Lincoln or Decatur,  
this wouldn't be possible. We were lucky to have  
our issues addressed once a month, if that.  
Short of a death in the family, there are no  
such things as an emergency and just have to  
wait until the counselor can get to us due to her  
overloaded caseload. In Kankakee, we have access  
to our counselor, Ms. Boeckmann, Mon thru Fri,  
and she does what she can to help us.

We see our healthcare staff within a day of  
needing medical non-emergency care. Church  
services are offered almost daily due to the

wonderful volunteers who care about coming in here for us.

Since being here, I've been able to get healthier due to the gym access including the fitness programs orchestrated by the LTS staff, at least twice a day, recreation is offered. In Dwight, we only got one hour, twice a week.

I must also mention the excellence put forth by our dietary staff. We are not only served good quality food and larger portions than that of Dwight and other institutions, but they also go that extra mile to make sure our needs are met and put in that extra touch, ensuring a good tasting meal. And most importantly, a very clean and sanitary environment.

For those who need treatment for various addictions, Wells Center here in Kankakee gets those who sign up for treatment in group within a day or two, Dwight ~~and~~ has a waiting list a year or more long.

All offenders here have non-violent backgrounds which I attribute to the lack of fights ~~and~~ that break out compared to Dwight, where at times, I've feared for my safety.

I may be leaving soon and the closing wouldn't directly affect me however, I'm leaving behind those I care about and if Kankakee were to close, it would be hard on not only them but their families as well. Thanks  
Brandy  
Craige

December 4, 2009

Senator Jeffery Schoenberg  
Rep. Richard Myers

I am writing in regards to the closing of Kankakee Minimum Security Unit. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the negative impact that closing Kmsu will have on me and many of the offenders residing here.

I transferred to Kmsu one year ago from Decatur Correctional Center due to the fact that it was closer to home and my family and because there was also no waiting list for treatment. In the 12 months I spent in Decatur, I received one visit from my family. My children were ages 17, 15 & 12. The gas prices at that time were over \$4.00 a gallon and they are still high for long trips. My relationship with my children has been positively affected by my being here. I now see my children 2 times a month sometimes more. I also get to see my 1 year old granddaughter and several friends. My mother is elderly and has alzheimers. She wasnt able to make the trip to Decatur. I now see her monthly, which helps her to remember who I am and where I am. My children are close enough that when they are

having a teenage crisis and need my guidance and support, they can come see me. We are closer than we've ever been. If KMSU closes, I will go back to not seeing my children and not only will that affect me, I know that it will have a serious, negative impact on my kids. They look forward to our visits together. I am also able to call more frequently because being closer to home the collect calls are much cheaper. Reunification is a big part of my successfully going back into society. KMSU is the closest facility to Chicago (Cook County) and there would be no reunification for those who get transferred to facilities farther away from their children.

Another negative impact will be on my recovery. The Wells program has truly helped in making me become a different woman. The small setting allows more one on one treatment with the counselors. When in Decatur, I was on the waiting list for Wells treatment for 12 months. When I transferred to KMSU, I started Wells immediately. That was the best thing I could have done. I have learned new coping skills that I can use instead of drinking. I have learned relapse prevention techniques and how to deal with stress, grief, anger and disappointment. I know how to make a 24 hour

plan that doesn't include drugs or alcohol. We are getting ready to work on parenting skills, decision making and healthy relationships. This program has taught me about how drugs affect my body physically and mentally. How to recognize the signs I want to use before I use, and what triggers those urges. If Kmsu closes, my treatment will abruptly stop and because of the long waiting lists at other facilities, I will no longer get the vital treatment I need to walk out these doors and not come back! Without treatment the recidivism rate will just get higher. I NEED this treatment to be a better mother, a better sister, a better daughter, a better employee and a better citizen. Please don't take this away from me. My recovery started when I came to Kmsu. Had I had a shorter sentence as most do, I would not even ~~had~~ been able to participate in a treatment program. Without continued treatment and regular visits from my children, what do I have? I still have 1 year left on my sentence. Please let me remain at Kmsu. And for all the women who come after me who need treatment before going back out into society. The women here are grateful to be here and our behavior reflects that. Treatment is an essential part of an

addicts recovery, and some not receiving treatment while incarcerated does not benefit the offender ~~of~~<sup>or</sup> society.

When considering closing Kmsu due to financial reasons, please ask if it is worth it. A majority of the offenders here at Kmsu will have to stay longer if transferred to other facilities because they will lose their contract days. Staying longer isn't going to save the state money either.

Kmsu also has a Toastmasters Club which teaches the art of public speaking. I have been attending meetings since I got to Kmsu. I am currently the Vice President and I write the bi-monthly newsletter. I have learned how to speak in front of people and truly enjoy it. I plan on using these skills to help others once I get out of prison.

The changes I've made in my life started when I came to Kmsu. I was just doing my time in Decatur. Being around others who care about not getting into trouble and who are really working on themselves makes all the difference in the world. That's the atmosphere at Kmsu and staff help us to accomplish our goals. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, Karen Alberso R81981

12/3/09

To State Legislator: Senator Schoenberg

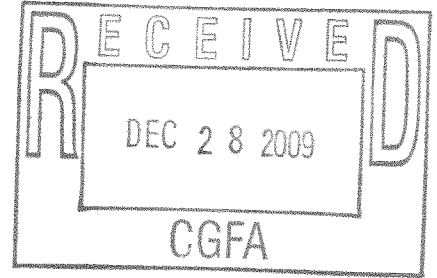
I truly believe that Kankakee Minimum Security Unit should stay open because it is the only facility that is ~~minimum~~ <sup>minimum</sup> Security. I feel safe here. I also feel that I have the positive support from other women to help me while I am incarcerated. It is also the only female Minimum Security Unit that we have in the ~~the~~ State of Illinois. The rest of the facilities are medium and maximum, and it wouldn't be fair to close the only Minimum Security Unit for us who are only minimum.

As for the Wells Program, I believe that it is really helping me. Like I said previously, I get the support from other women here. We are all here for each other. This program at KMSU is imperative for women who have an addiction in drugs and alcohol. Wells also helps us reach our goals for recovery. If it wasn't for the Wells Counselors, I wouldn't have gotten this far with my recovery and being so positive or being sober. ~~the~~ This Program has really helped

me. I feel I have come a long way.  
And I would like to say that I appreciate  
everything that the Counselors has  
given me.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Scarborough<sup>2</sup>.





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10/09



December 21, 2009

Senator Jeffery Schoenberg  
Representative Richard Myers  
Co-Chairs  
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability  
703 Stratton Office Building  
Springfield, IL 62706

VIA FAX: 217-782-3513

Dear Co-Chairs Schoenberg and Myers:

AFSCME Council 31 objects to the closure of 400 beds at Jessie Ma Houston ATC and the Kankakee Minimum Security Unit. Both facilities address the needs of low level offenders – exactly those individuals who, with the right combination of consequences and supports – could turn their lives around. We ask that the Department of Corrections’ request for closure be rejected by the Commission.

We propose that the Department keep all 400 beds open. While there are significant financial and structural problems with the current Jessie Ma location, it can be relocated.

As those Commissioners who attended the recent COGFA public hearing on these closures will be keenly aware, these closures would violate the central mission publicly expressed by the Quinn Administration and the current leadership of DOC; a determination to improve prisoner reentry and reduce recidivism rates by concentrating on rehabilitation. In particular, the closure of the only female minimum security facility in the state prison system, and resulting placement of low-level female offenders in Dwight – which is a maximum security facility – will lead to negative outcomes for these offenders.

Closing these facilities would push our state further backward in efforts to redeem these individuals, and would condemn the communities where they reside to further crime.

We ask the Commission to reject the closures of both Jessie Ma Houston ATC and Kankakee MSU. At the same time the Commission should urge the Department of Corrections to back up its stated commitment to renewed efforts to rehabilitate inmates by investing in programming and services for low level offenders serving sentences in DOC facilities.

Sincerely,

Henry Bayer  
Executive Director

cc: COGFA members

Good afternoon. I am Ken Potocki, Regional Director for AFSCME Council 31 and our Union's chief liaison with the Department of Corrections. I am here today to express our Union's opposition to the closure of Kankakee MSU and to the reduction in ATC beds that would occur under the current closure plan for the Jesse "Ma" Houston ATC.

I am going to speak to specific issues we have with each closure. First I want to point out that it's unfortunate that we didn't have more information at the outset from the Department about the closures. Both closures are clearly driven by budget problems, not sound policy rationales. We requested more information about the impact of these closures weeks ago which we only received last night, suggesting that DOC initiated these closures without any clear idea of what the alternatives might be.

We are painfully aware that budget problems do exist. However, you are going to have even bigger budget problems if you eliminate programs like these with a proven track record for reducing recidivism. The Director of DOC speaks frequently about early release, and about diversion programs he hopes to create, and that he hopes will mean fewer inmates in the system. But right now we have facilities over capacity, understaffed and without sufficient counseling, education and other programming. The result is a high rate of recidivism. Simply releasing inmates before their sentences are completed will not reduce that rate unless there are structures in place to help these individuals to become productive members of their communities.

When you eliminate ATC beds, which prepare inmates for their release and get them ready for community living, that will mean greater reentry problems, not improvements. When you close a facility that houses women in a healing environment, where their family is free to visit frequently and where most are getting treatment for their addictions, you'll create rather than solve problems. That is especially true when you move those same women to facilities farther from their families--facilities which house more serious offenders without the same kind of therapeutic environment. You'll have more reentry problems, and that will cost more.

**Jessie "Ma" Houston:** This is a facility that prepares inmates for reentry into our communities. Director Randle, in a recent address to the John Howard Association, spoke of the importance of ATCs to the Department's program of improving inmate reentry into communities when they are released.

The Department's COGFA filing is confusing. The numbers it provides on ATC capacity are different than those the Department provides in its quarterly report to the legislature. The last such report DOC filed – for July, 2009 – showed ATCs for male offenders were operating at an average 93% of capacity, not the 81% of capacity the Department reports in its COGFA filing

The COGFA filing purports to show a drop off in ATC population. But it is DOC that caused that drop off. Courts do not place inmates in ATCs. DOC prison-based counselors recommend inmates for placement, and then DOC central office makes the final decision on who is appropriate for placement. The sharp fall off in ATC population from July to October was not due to any declining trend in incarceration in that three month period. By DOC's own admission in the COGFA filing, the prison population is stable, and "if more offenders are sentenced to prison, then the population will increase."

My name is Lavond Borders and I am a Corrections Residence Counselor at Jessie "Ma" Houston ATC. We need ATCs if we are going to reduce our recidivism rate in Illinois, and we need an ATC in the Southland.

When a person comes out of prison they are scared. They are coming out of a very structured environment, and they don't know how to do a lot of things. They don't know how to get their state ID. They don't know how to get decent housing. They don't know how to get a job. Then they've been away from their families, and they don't know how to reconnect with their spouse or their kids. The ATC program shows them how to do all those things before they get out. We build a foundation for them, so they feel supported when they leave.

For some of these men, hustling and street life is all they know. They don't know how to live a lifestyle that's not related to the criminal element. If they leave prison and go right back on the street, going back to their old life is the easiest thing. And then our communities pay the price.

But if they go through our facility first, before they hit the street, they get a taste of what I call the natural life. We connect them to jobs, and for some it's the first real job they held in their lives. Then we help them to budget their earnings, including paying a percentage of their earnings as rent to the state. We get them in school, which is anything from GED to college. We give them classes in parenting, anger management, relationship building, and substance abuse counseling.

The men do most of these things outside the facility, working at a construction site or in a fast food restaurant, or going to a community college. They are still in a structured environment, we monitor their whereabouts, but they get to ease back into society. We assist them before they go out on parole. We teach them to make good decisions, before they return to the community.

Our facility was named for Jesse "Ma" Houston, who fought for inmate rights. Her son died in prison, so she devoted her life to visiting inmates and lifting them up, encouraging them to straighten out their lives. That is a beautiful legacy, and this facility has lived up to her legacy by helping the inmates, their families and our communities. We want this facility to stay open, but if the problems with the building are so bad, then DOC should open another Jessie "Ma" Houston ATC site on the Southside or in the South suburbs. Let her legacy live on.

Phone 708-371-2032  
Cell: 773-663-5102  
Fax 708-371-7257

The sharp three-month drop in ATC population was clearly the result of a DOC decision to reduce placements—a decision which stands in stark contrast to Director Randle’s stated goal of improving prisoner reentry through, among other means, the use of ATCs.

No one would suggest that investing more money in the current facility in Dixmoor, which is badly run-down, makes sense. But neither can anyone argue that we will improve inmates’ reentry into society without a strong ATC system. Instead of simply closing the Jessie Ma Houston beds, AFSCME believes these 200 beds and its successful program should be relocated to another site.

**Kankakee MSU:** Closing this facility is a disservice to women in Illinois who are sentenced to non-violent crimes and are considered to be low security risks. They will all now serve their sentences among more serious and violent offenders, as KMSU is the only minimum security prison for women in the state.

As with the Jessie Ma Houston filing, the materials DOC filed with COGFA regarding this closure are confusing. DOC claims the female population in FY 09 was between 2,700 and 2,800 inmates, whereas now it is only some 2,500. In fact, DOC’s quarterly report to the legislature shows the female population has held steady at about 2,600 inmates for the past three years, and in October – according to data provided in the filing – was slightly higher than it was in July.

And again, DOC provides misleading data on system capacity. By counting how many beds are crammed into a prison, instead of counting how many inmates it was designed to hold, DOC claims to COGFA that there is plenty of capacity. But DOC’s most recent quarterly report to the legislature shows that, on the contrary, female facilities were on average operating at 33% **overcapacity**. Losing these beds will mean more overcrowding. So contrary to that COGFA filing, KMSU is needed now, and will continue to be needed in the future.

One final piece of information that we asked for should be noted for its absence. We asked DOC to tell us how many inmates will be sent to each of the three facilities they state will be used to house KMSU inmates – Decatur and Lincoln, which are medium security, and Dwight, which is maximum security. They still have not answered this question. What DOC did say is that inmates will also be given the opportunity to go to Fox Valley ATC. However, that facility has been consistently operating at 20% overcapacity for the last three years.

What is worse, DOC states outright that there will be no additional staff added to improve program capacity at the receiving facilities. Allowing a few inmates to go to Fox Valley, or crowding them into already overcrowded, higher security facilities are clearly not solutions for low-level female offenders. DOC should keep Kankakee MSU open, and restore programming cut from the facility in previous years. That is the kind of investment the Department has talked about making in inmate rehabilitation, and we want to see it in action.

Today I have with me some employees from these facilities who will explain the important role that they play and share some specifics with you about why these facilities are needed.

My name is Sandra Boeckmann. I've worked for the Department of Corrections for over 15 years, for the last 8 as a Counselor at Kankakee Minimum Security Unit. At KMSU we are a community that works toward a greater good. KMSU is designed to reintegrate women into the community.

I know the Department has said that they will have jobs available for staff at KMSU. But they aren't saying there will be another minimum security facility for our female inmates, because there won't be. The women will be going to a maximum or medium facility. The women at KMSU and all future inmates classified as minimum security risk are going to be hurt by this closure.

I've worked at other DOC facilities, and I've talked to inmates who've done time at the places DOC plans to send the KMSU inmates. Those places don't have the same environment at all. Some of our DOC facilities are pretty rough places because of the number and type of inmates they keep.

KMSU is a much more open place, and with that open environment comes a different attitude from inmates and even staff. Our inmates don't have the same hostility toward each other, or the same guardedness toward staff.

Being a small facility the inmates get a lot of one-on-one attention from staff. I know the women in my caseload and I see them pretty much every day. At a large facility you might see your counselor only once a month. At KMSU the women are not just a number, and that makes it more likely we can turn them around. Some of the service providers who work with our women have commented to me that they are easier to help because they don't have a wall up around them like inmates at other prisons.

What's it like in a larger, more secure facility? One of our inmates who transferred from Decatur, a medium security facility, told me they issue the inmates their own roll of toilet paper every few days. The woman said you have to put your name on your toilet paper and guard it or another inmate might take it and you won't get another one to replace it. That seems like a small thing, but it's part of a mindset where everybody has to look out for themselves or somebody might take advantage.

We're not like that at KMSU. Everybody's got access to the toilet paper; you take what you need. The inmates don't have to fight each other for it. We can do that because we have only minimum security inmates who are not as dangerous, and they are in with other women like them.

When you have minimum security inmates who are in for crimes like writing bad checks and retail theft, and you put them in with more dangerous inmates who've done more serious crimes like murder and armed robbery, you have to be more secure. And it also means that the inmates in for the less serious crimes might spend their time learning to be a better criminal, instead of turning their lives around.

I've heard back from inmates we've helped. One woman called to tell me that KMSU saved her life. She said now she's a different person than the addict she was then. She is going to school, she's got her kids back, and she's doing fantastic. I remember another inmate was fighting to retain custody of her kids. Their father in another state wanted to take them while she was incarcerated, although her current husband was bringing the kids to KMSU for regular visits. We arranged for the social worker on the case to come observe a visit at our center, and she agreed the atmosphere was completely non-threatening for the kids. The inmate retained custody.

I calculate the numbers every month, and I can tell you that over 80% of KMSU women are mothers. Family visits are very important, both for the inmate and the family, especially if there are kids. If you have a young child, you can't keep a bond over the phone. We are the closest female facility to Cook County, and for poor families without reliable transportation that proximity makes a big difference. And it's a lot more intimidating for kids and unpleasant for families to walk into a higher security facility. A woman on my caseload was previously incarcerated at Decatur, where she saw her daughter only once. Now she has visits twice a month. That has made a world of difference in her relationship with her daughter.

At KMSU we've suffered from program cuts like a lot of the other prisons. But we still have our Adult Basic Education and GED classes. The Wells Center offers substance abuse counseling to our inmates. And we provide parenting classes.

I understand KMSU was first created when inmate advocates sued the state to get women prisoners the right to do their time in a low security setting with more programs. Kankakee MSU was worth fighting for then, and it's worth fighting for now.

[SandraB72@att.net](mailto:SandraB72@att.net)

Wk – 815-476-5201 x250

Hm – 815-936-1783

My name is Cheryl O'Brien and I have been an Educator at Kankakee MSU for over 9 years. I want to talk about why DOC needs a minimum security facility for women.

KMSU was established as the result of a lawsuit known as Moorhead v. McGinnis. Inmate advocates sued the state to force DOC to open a minimum security facility to give women the greater freedom and access to programs that male DOC inmates in minimum security facilities have. There was a consent decree signed in 1991 that states: "Defendants (that's DOC) shall, by no later than Sept. 30, 1993, designate at least one facility with at least a 200 bed capacity for female inmates which is classified as minimum security."

Illinois needed a minimum security facility then, and we still need one now.

None of the other female correctional facilities are minimum security. Dwight is maximum, Decatur and Lincoln are medium, and Fox Valley is an ATC. DOC is saying our inmates will go to Dwight, Lincoln and Decatur, which means they will all go to more secure facilities.

Kankakee MSU looks completely different from even a medium security prison. It is an atmosphere conducive to family visits and self-improvement, which is what women sentenced to relatively minor crimes and showing good behavior are entitled to. There are no fences. Women sleep two to a room instead of in large dorms or cells. We have an open visiting policy. And because we are small, we know our women and are able to move them forward, and that is what changes lives.

I have a student who just got her GED. She failed the test twice, but I kept on her. Now she is going home a changed person. When she's asked on a job application if she has her high school diploma she can say, "Yes." She'll have more opportunities because she was in a place where she wasn't a number.

The women at Kankakee are low level offenders. They made bad choices. We all make bad choices, though some worse than others. Our mission at DOC is supposed to be punishment and reform. But DOC is talking about sending these women to Dwight, which is maximum security. These low level offenders will be swallowed up at Dwight.

I understand there are now women sitting in intake for two months or more, waiting for a medium security bed. They could work with our program, but DOC seems to be classifying more and more inmates as medium security. We had an inmate in previously at Kankakee MSU who came back into the system. She was classified as medium security this time around, supposedly because she has a previous arrest for arson. That doesn't make any sense. It was an arrest, not a conviction. It was a one-time offense, not a pattern. It occurred when she was a juvenile. And it was on her record the last time she was in. Then it didn't matter and she was classified as minimum. Now it's convenient to call her more of a threat. That means she is in with more hard core offenders, instead of in a place that could make a difference.

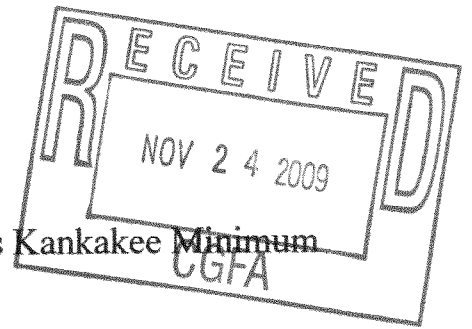
KMSU is an asset to a system that wants to make a difference. If DOC wants to get rid of KMSU, what does that say about our state's commitment to offering these women, their families and their communities, another chance?

815-476-5201 x 232  
[Cobrien65@aol.com](mailto:Cobrien65@aol.com)

November 19, 2009

Dear Panel Member:

I am writing you about the dismaying news that the Women's Kankakee Minimum Security Prison is slated for closing!!



I have been a volunteer there for 10 years, and have given Re-Entry Classes, Resource Classes, Journaling classes, and Scripture Reflection Groups. I always am there once a week, and often twice a week, so I feel I know the staff and institution very well. This is why I am stunned that budget cuts would close the **ONLY WOMEN'S MINIMUM SECURITY PRISON** in the state. Actually, it would save very little money, as it is a small institution with a small staff, and there would be continued employment for the staff in other prisons.

It is the only prison where any woman who registers can be in the Drug Treatment program, unlike other prisons. It is small, so the women can receive the attention they need as preparation for their re-entry into the community.

KMSU has open visitation and allows more visits a month for families than other prisons. This is so important to the support and preparation necessary for women to become healthy and whole and ready to join society.

A huge worry for me, is that in closing Kankakee Minimum Security, the women will be transferred down state and will lose contact with their families, which is now possible.

I am a Social Worker, and worked for Lutheran Social Services for years; particularly working with women in prison, and beginning a program "Reconnections" for women coming out of prison. Therefore I know quite a bit about the needs and issues of these women. Thus, I am pleading with you to do something about this dreadful decision, which will make one more problem both for the women and society, by disconnecting them from their families and accessible treatment.

I count on you to take this very seriously and not let women once again be discounted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Patricia Schlosser".

Sister Patricia Schlosser, MSW, ACSW

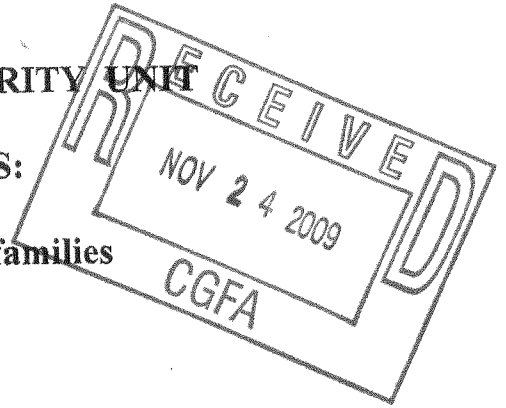
7107 N. Paulina

Chi, IL 60626

A handwritten note in cursive script that reads "Petitions enclosed".



**PETITION PROTESTING THE CLOSING OF KANKAKEE MINIMUM SECURITY UNIT**



**WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, PROTEST THIS FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:**

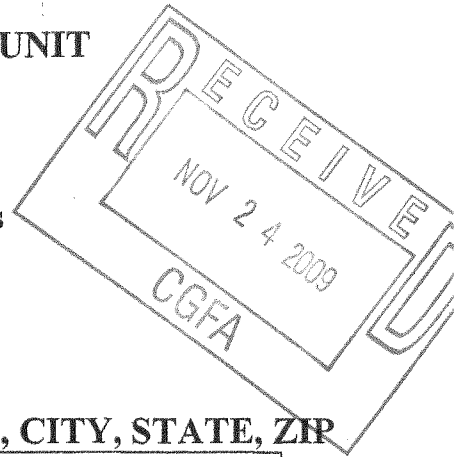
- ❖ **KMSU is the only Women's Minimum Security Prison in the state**
- ❖ **The women would be transferred to other prisons farther removed from their families**
- ❖ **It is the one prison, where there is no waiting list for Drug/Alcohol Treatment**
- ❖ **Closing it would save only an infinitesimal amount of money**
- ❖ **It has open visitation for the families**

PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP
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Matthew Wiley	Matthew Wiley	2100 W. WARREN 3RD
Bruce Askew	Bruce Askew	6237 S. Aberdeen Chgo
Kenya Smith	Kenya Smith	4035 GARDNER ST CHGO

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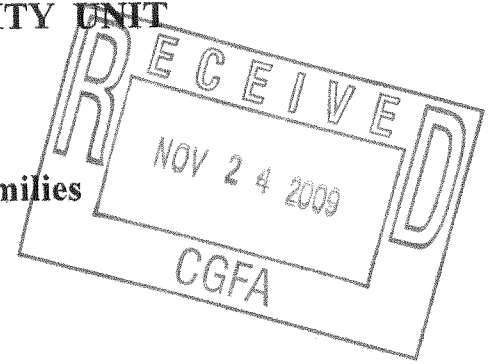


PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP
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Laura Tucker	<i>Laura Tucker</i>	1741 Hinman Ave Evanston, 60201
Beverly Ann Madser	<i>Beverly Ann Madser</i>	905 Knottingham Dr, Ottawa, IL 61350
Saloma S. Norris	<i>Saloma S. Norris</i>	2606 E. 28th Rd, Marseilles, IL 61341
Johnnie M. Newton	<i>Johnnie M. Newton</i>	2309 W. 79th Pl, Chicago, IL 60620
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Janice Henry	<i>Janice Henry</i>	5079 W Monroe Ck (44)
ELLEN JANIEC	<i>Ellen Janiec</i>	1421 WOODBRIDGE 36 JOLIET 60436
CORONNE LYON	<i>Coronne M Lyon</i>	5000 SCORNELL CHICAGO 60615
Bethina Houlihan	<i>Bethina Houlihan</i>	5316 S. Dorchester CHICAGO 60615

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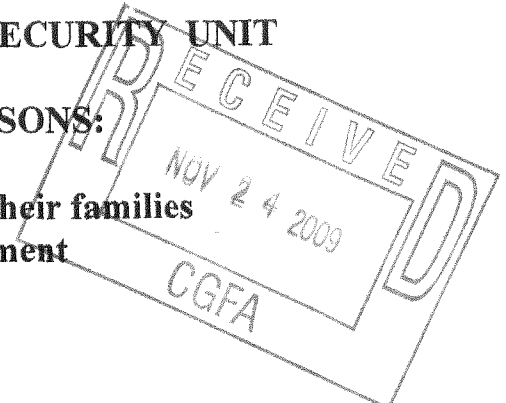


PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP
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Darlene Gant	Darlene Gant	1801 W. Adams Chicago 60612
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D'Andrea Kelow	D'Andrea Kelow	1801 W. Adams Chicago, 60612
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DIANA LUNDIN.	Diana Lundin	1801 W. Adams, Chicago, Ill. 60612.
LATOYA WISEMAN	LATOYA WISEMAN	1801 W. Adams Chgo. Ill. 60612
Andrea Parker	Andrea Parker	1801 W Adams Chicago Ill 60612
Debra Luckett	Debra Luckett	1801 W. Adams Chgo Ill 60612
Glenda Lyons	Glenda Lyons	1801 W. Adams Chgo. Ill. 60612
Jennifer Powers	Jennifer Powers	1801 W. Adams Chicago 60612
Darreamius Ray	Darreamius Ray	1801 W. Adams chgo 60612.

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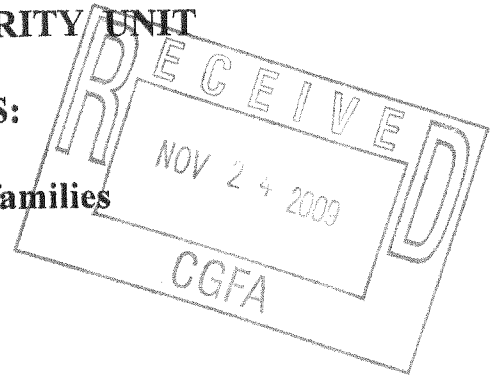
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PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP
Megan DeCarlo	<i>Megan DeCarlo</i>	2467 W. Pensacola Apt # 2 Chicago, IL 60618
Brenda Clark	<i>Brenda Clark</i>	10633 S. Cicero St. Chicago, IL 60643
Peter Daane	<i>Peter Daane</i>	1488 W. Argyle Chicago, IL 60640
Penny Frisch	<i>Penny Frisch</i>	2213 Dodge Ave Evanston IL 60201
Cozetta Uwejean	<i>Cozetta Uwejean</i>	7840 S. Kenwood Chicago IL 60619
Edith Head	<i>Edith Head</i>	7712 S. Shore Drive Chicago, IL 60649
Latrice Turner	<i>Latrice Turner</i>	2115 W 63rd Apt 404 Chicago IL 60636
Jean Hughes	<i>Jean Hughes</i>	2100 W Warren Blvd Chicago, IL 60612
Williams, Brunette	<i>Brunette Williams</i>	6426 S. Albany Chicago IL 60637
Kevin Muhammad	<i>Kevin Muhammad</i>	11836 S. Loomis Chgo IL 60643
Bob Dougherty	<i>Bob Dougherty</i>	3017 E. 78 Chicago IL 60649
Victor A. Harpin	<i>Victor A. Harpin</i>	2740 S. Prairie Chicago, IL 60616

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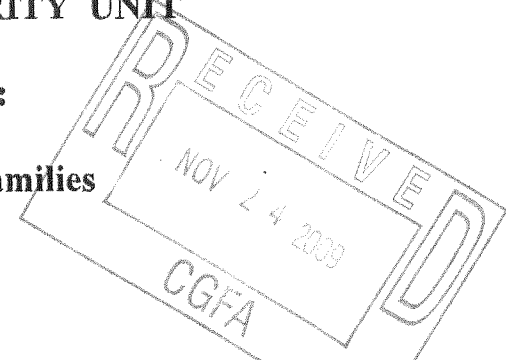
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PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP
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EUNICE DRAZBA	Eunice Drazba	444 W 44 <sup>th</sup> St Chic 60609
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Dense Grossm	Dennis Grossm	6558 W. Troy St. Chicago 60648
Richard Grossm	R. Grossm	" " " "
Thompson, D	Thompson D	" " " "
Pamela Bennett	Pamela Bennett	5157 S. Federal 60646
Emerson Bacon	Emerson Bacon	518 W ROSCOE ST CHICAGO 60657

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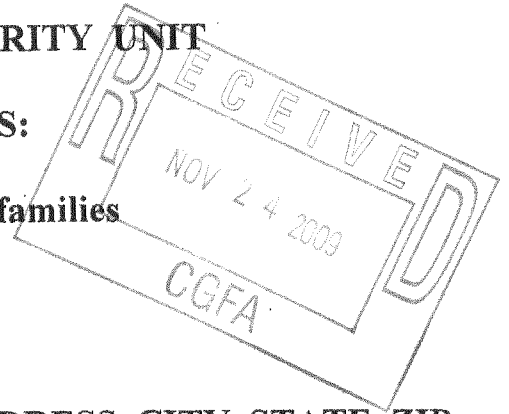


PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP
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EDWARD SHUSIS	E Shusis	866 Seminary Rd, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
MARCIE SHUSIS	M Shusis	" " "
ADDISON Shields Jr	Rev Addison Shields Jr	3309 S. MICHIGAN, Chgo, IL 60616
Dwayne L. Grant	Rev. Dwayne L. Grant	5805 W. Race Chgo, IL 60644
Catherine Burnett	Catherine Burnett	4528 W. Grenshaw St. Chicago 60624
Katie Friedline	Katherine Friedline	9041 S. Exchange, Chicago, IL 60617
LISA Cockerham	Lisa Cockerham	220 W. Warren Blvd Chicago 60612
RONALD JONES	Ronald Jones	929 W. 83rd St. Chicago, 60620
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Yolanda Burgess	Yolanda Burgess	8017 S. Ingleside Ave. 3A Chgo IL 60619
THURSTON Burgess II	Thurston Burgess II	8017 S. Ingleside Ave 3A Chgo IL 60619

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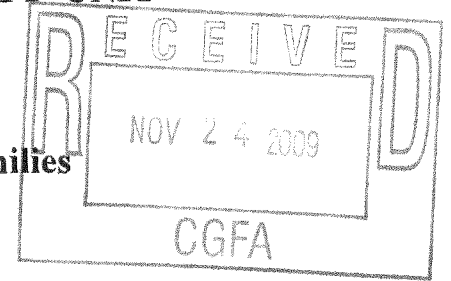
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Kelley Bambenek	Kelley Bambenek	1648 W. Ogden Chicago, IL 60612
Betty Gibson	Betty Gibson	1648 W. Ogden Chicago, IL 60612
MARINA CARROTT	Marina Carrott	1122 N. DEARBORN ST, # 201 CHICAGO, IL 60610
ALEC Lifschultz	Alec Lifschultz	907 W. ARGYLE chgo, IL APT #218 60640
Philip Robinson	Phil Robinson	7027 S. ILLINOIS chgo IL 60637
LAMONT PALMER	Lamont Palmer	7024 S PERKINS #3E 60621
Bolling, Sequita	Sequita Bolling	
STEVEN D. McManus	Steven D. McManus	3530 W. VAN BUREN 60624
Tatsy Steyn	Tatsy Steyn	7947 S. Redwicks Chgo., IL 60619
Karen L. Brooks	Karen L. Brooks	6974 S. Woodlawn Ave. Chgo., IL 60637-4725
Joyce Allen	Joyce Allen	6974 S. Woodlawn Ave. 60637



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Monica Howe	<i>Monica Howe</i>	6624 S. Michigan Av. Chgo 60637
Erin Ryan	<i>Erin Ryan</i>	1409 W. Estes #1B Elgin 60120
Bekah Carlson	<i>Bekah Carlson</i>	5032 N Lindcott #2, Chicago 60640
Quintez Dunbar	<i>Quintez Dunbar</i>	2110 W. WARREN BLVD
Darius WEBSTER	<i>Darius Webster</i>	7804 S. Yates BLVD
Paris Mackmore	<i>Paris Mackmore</i>	16524 S. Prairie S. Holland IL
NATHANIEL BENDS	<i>Nathaniel Bends</i>	4030 W. CONGRESS
Miguel Cruz	<i>Miguel Cruz</i>	58 - N - HOYNE
Alomo Korate	<i>Alomo Korate</i>	2100 W. Warren
James Little	<i>James Little</i>	7700. So Aberdeen
Jacob Ferguson	<i>Jacob Ferguson</i>	50 N. Hoyne Chicago, IL 60612
Blenda Lyons	<i>B. Lyons</i>	1801 W. Adams Chgo 60612

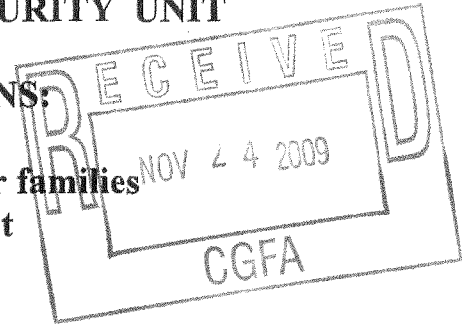




**PETITION PROTESTING THE CLOSING OF KANKAKEE MINIMUM SECURITY UNIT**

**WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, PROTEST THIS FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:**

- ❖ **KMSU is the only Women's Minimum Security Prison in the state**
- ❖ **The women would be transferred to other prisons farther removed from their families**
- ❖ **It is the one prison, where there is no waiting list for Drug/Alcohol Treatment**
- ❖ **Closing it would save only an infinitesimal amount of money**
- ❖ **It has open visitation for the families**



PRINTED NAME	SIGNATURE	STREET ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP
Dorothea JUNG	<i>Dorothea Jung</i>	9941 S. Hamilton
JEAN LESLIE	<i>Jean Leslie</i>	10035 S. HAMILTON
<i>Eileen Broderick</i>	<i>Eileen Broderick</i>	10509 S. Claremont
<i>Korinne Dantoch</i>	<i>Smith Village</i>	2320 113 <sup>th</sup> St,
NORMA J FLYNN	<i>Norma J Flynn</i>	10018 S. Bell Ave
<i>Margaret Martinez</i>	<i>Margaret Martinez</i>	4 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup> 60626 1336 W. North Shore
Gail Smith	<i>Gail Smith</i>	5313 N Virginia Chi 60625