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Settlement Reached in Pivotal SPLC Federal Lawsuit for Transgender Woman Denied Proper Medical Care in Georgia Prison

Agreement Will Resolve Federal Lawsuit Against Georgia Department of Corrections

MONTGOMERY, Ala. – The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) announced today that a settlement agreement has been reached in a federal lawsuit filed against Georgia Department of Corrections officials on behalf of a transgender woman who was denied medically necessary treatment and sexually assaulted by other prisoners while she was held at a men's prison.

The settlement agreement ends the lawsuit filed by the SPLC almost a year ago on behalf of Ashley Diamond. As part of the agreement, the Department of Corrections agreed to pay Diamond, 37, an undisclosed financial settlement.

Diamond, who [was released](#) from a Georgia prison in August 2015 after pressure from the SPLC lawsuit, was serving a sentence for a probation violation stemming from a nonviolent crime. She was denied female hormones she had been receiving for 17 years – medically necessary care for her gender dysphoria. Diamond was sexually assaulted by prisoners at least eight times while incarcerated.

Watch a video with Ashley: <http://sp.lc/Yff5o>

“We’re pleased that we were able to favorably resolve this case on behalf of Ashley Diamond and bring international attention to the plight of transgender prisoners,” said Chinyere Ezie, SPLC staff attorney. “Our lawsuit and Ashley Diamond’s bravery brought about important changes in Georgia, and have put prison officials across the country on notice about the constitutional rights of transgender persons.”

Prior to the agreement, the federal lawsuit sparked reforms aimed at helping to improve the safety and well-being of transgender inmates in Georgia and nationwide. The U.S. Department of Justice issued a seminal statement in support of the SPLC’s case, declaring that gender dysphoria is a condition requiring medical treatment like any other disease. This means that corrections departments across the country have a constitutional obligation to provide transgender inmates with medically necessary care, including hormone therapy.

Following the filing of the SPLC’s lawsuit, the Georgia Department of Corrections rescinded its “freeze frame” policy that prevented many transgender inmates from receiving medically necessary treatment. Because of the case, dozens of transgender inmates across the state are now receiving hormone therapy for the first time since entering custody. The Georgia Department of

Corrections also adopted a sexual assault prevention policy that is more closely aligned with federal standards, and is in the process of training staff in prisons throughout the state on the health and safety needs of transgender inmates.

“This lawsuit has always been about more than me,” Diamond said. “It’s about standing up to injustice and ensuring that no other transgender people endure the horrific abuse and mistreatment that I experienced behind bars. Though I am pleased with this resolution, I remain dedicated to fighting for the rights of transgender people both in and out of prison.”

Diamond was released early from prison three years into an eight-year sentence when the Georgia Department of Corrections determined that her release “was compatible with the welfare of society and public safety.”

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The Southern Poverty Law Center, based in Alabama with offices in Georgia, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi, is a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry, and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society. For more information, see www.splcenter.org.