

“Social justice should be the underlying goal of all humanity.”

-Alan V. Lowenstein, Institute Founder

institute25

NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE | 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Board of Trustees

Paulette Brown, Esq.

Chair

Robin A. Lenhardt, Esq.

Vice Chair

Kenneth Y. Tanji

Treasurer

B. John Pendleton, Jr., Esq.

Secretary

Ryan P. Haygood, Esq.

President & CEO

Tanuja Dehne

Douglas S. Eakeley, Esq.

(Immediate Past Chair)

John J. Farmer, Jr., Esq.

(Past Chair)

Paul J. Fishman, Esq.

Michael D. Francis, Esq.

Jerome C. Harris, Jr.

Rev. Timothy Adkins-Jones, Ph.D.

Sandra King

John H. Lowenstein, Ph.D.

Diana DeJesus-Medina

James McQueeney

Patricia Nachtigal, Esq.

Darrell K. Terry, Sr.

Martin Vergara II

Justin White

Antoinette Ellis-Williams, Ph.D.

Zulima V. Farber, Esq. *(Emerita)*

Roger A. Lowenstein, Esq. *(Emeritus)*

Theodore V. Wells, Jr., Esq. *(Emeritus)*

Founders

Alan V. and Amy Lowenstein*

Founding Board President

Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, Esq.*

Founding Board Vice President

Hon. Dickinson R. Debevoise*

*deceased

60 Park Place, Suite 511

Newark, NJ 07102-5504

ph. (973) 624-9400

fax (973) 624-0704

email: justice@njisj.org

www.njisj.org

do social justice.

November 21, 2024

Governor Philip Murphy

225 W State Street

Trenton, NJ 08625

Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin

25 Market Street

Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy and Attorney General Platkin,

We, the undersigned, write with great concern regarding the recent charges against two New Jersey corrections officers for sexually assaulting a young woman under the care of the Juvenile Justice Commission at the Female Secure Intake Facility.

The details of the charges, as you know, are shocking and unacceptable: the officers are accused of sexually assaulting, on multiple occasions, an 18-year-old resident of the facility under their protection and care.

New Jersey's failure to keep this young woman safe is especially alarming given that the Female Secure Intake Facility has a total population of just [five young women](#). This abuse follows another deeply disturbing account from [fifty men](#) who, as youth under the care of the Juvenile Justice Commission, were subjected to pervasive sexual abuse, rape and retaliation by facility staff—abuse that spanned [decades](#).

This kind of abuse of young people in New Jersey's youth facilities is similar to the widespread abuses uncovered at Edna Mahan Women's Prison, which led you, Governor Murphy, to rightly commit to its closure in 2021.

And it speaks to your wisdom, Attorney General Platkin, to [announce plans](#) to close two of New Jersey's three youth prisons as early as 2028, and create the "Secure Care to Restorative Care" working group to envision and execute on a vision for facilities once they close and conceive a path forward on restoring the Bordentown School.

In light of these recent abuses at the Female Secure Intake Facility, we respectfully urge you both, as we explain below, to: 1) accelerate the closure of the Female Secure

Intake Facility and the New Jersey Training School youth prison, and 2) conduct an expeditious independent investigation into the reported abuse in the Female Secure Intake Facility.

Expedited Timeline for Closure

First, we call for an accelerated closure of the Female Secure Intake Facility, New Jersey Training School, and Juvenile Medium Security Facility. This incident highlights that New Jersey’s incarcerated youth deserve the kind of protection that comes from a community-based, developmentally appropriate system of care that is grounded in restorative justice. They deserve an environment that prioritizes their growth, healing and well-being, which, as the recent charges reflect, is not available in the current system.

Independent Investigation and Full Transparency of Findings

Second, we call for an expeditious independent investigation into the policies, procedures and operational standards within the Juvenile Justice Commission and its leadership, including at the Female Secure Intake Facility, to identify any specific failures that allowed these egregious incidents to occur—and whether there are additional incidents that have not come to light.

The findings of this investigation should, consistent with the privacy rights of youth, be publicly released, with comprehensive and transparent action plans to address all identified issues.

New Jersey’s youth deserve a juvenile justice system that protects their safety and well-being, not one that perpetuates abuse, endangers them and undermines the integrity of the system itself.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

New Jersey Institute of Social Justice*
American Friends Service Committee Prison Watch
Anti-Violence Coalition of Hudson County
Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Bordentown Historical Society*
Cape May County NAACP
Christ Temple Baptist Church
Destination Innovation Inc (Progeny)
Faith in New Jersey
HPCMO
Hudson Partnership CMO
Latino Action Network
Lawrence-Citizen-Activists
Lowenstein Sandler Center for the Public Interest*
Masjid Waarith ud Deen
NAACP
New Brunswick Area NAACP
New Jersey Parents Caucus
New Jersey Prison Justice Watch*
Newark Community Street Team
Newark Opportunity Youth Network

NJ Coalition to End Domestic Violence
NJ Communities for Accountable Policing (NJCAP)
Our Revolution New Jersey
Parent Impact
Passaic County Department of Human Services
Reimagining justice Inc.
Returning Citizens Support Group
Salvation and Social Justice*
Seeds & Berries
Social Responsibility Through Me
The New Jersey Black Issues Convention
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair
Women Who Never Give Up
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.
Youth First Justice Collaborative

**Signors are members of the Secure Care to Restorative Care Working Group*