



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State of Colorado reaches settlement with transgender inmate who alleged injuries at state correctional facilities

July 10, 2019 (DENVER, Colo.)—Today, Attorney General Phil Weiser and the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) announced that the State of Colorado has reached a settlement with Lindsay Saunders-Velez, a transgender woman serving out her sentence at various state correctional facilities. Saunders-Velez filed various claims against the CDOC and other parties, alleging the defendants were not providing adequate housing, services, and treatment for transgender inmates.

“The settlement with Lindsay Saunders-Velez specifically addresses claims she has brought against the State. Colorado is on the forefront of this issue and has already implemented progressive policies aimed at the fair and dignified treatment of all transgender offenders. This settlement reflects Colorado’s commitment to these values and continuous improvement. My office is committed to continuing to work with and support the CDOC as it explores ways to enhance its policies and continue its leadership in this area.”

The CDOC has implemented an intake process for transgender offenders that addresses housing and placement options on a case-by-case basis. It is also among a handful of state corrections agencies to implement a policy that allows transgender offenders housed in a male facility to access female hygiene and commissary items. It has implemented agency-wide training regarding the use of pronouns and respectful interactions with transgender offenders, and it has expanded medical provider responsibilities to assume the treatment and monitoring of transgender offenders at intake and post-intake.

The State Claims Board has approved the settlement agreement, which is effective 30 days after the State Controller signs it. Funds will be held until Saunders-Velez is released and the settlement will become void if she files a new claim against the State between now and her release date.

Attorneys from the Civil Litigation & Employment Law Section at the Colorado Department of Law advised the CDOC on this case as part of an exemplary team effort that addressed important issues.

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