

To: Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board

From: Judge Elliot Howsie

Re: September 23, 2022-Tour of Allegheny County Jail

On Friday, September 23, 2022, I along with Steve Pilarski took a two-hour tour of the ACJ. During the tour, I found the jail to be clean and orderly with the staff members fulfilling their daily obligations as expected. The staff members were generally polite and accommodating. After arriving at the ACJ, we were met by Captain Frank. Captain Frank was kind enough to accompany us during the tour and she was available to answer any additional questions that we had. Given the issues that have repeatedly come up during the JOB Meetings, we specifically requested to visit the kitchen, security center, intake area, juvenile pod, female pod, and fifth floor medical pod.

The first location that we visited was the Security Center, which has been in operation since 2022. The officers indicated that the current equipment in the Security Center is the most up to date equipment available. Due to technological improvements, the officers and staff have the ability to monitor the entire jail every minute of the day, seven days per week to ensure that the staff are complying with the ACJ policies and procedures. The officers in the Security Center stated that the security system has better equipped them to monitor the incarcerated individuals to maintain their safety as well as the security of the facility.

After touring the Security Center, we went to the kitchen to observe the meal preparation. The kitchen workers informed me that the meal that was being served was turkey ham, green beans, potatoes and gravy, cornbread, and a piece of cake. Several workers indicated that they did not like the food and one worker stated that the food at the Westmoreland County Jail is much better. During the meal prep, a few kitchen workers approached us to discuss the cleanliness of the kitchen. The incarcerated individuals stated that in the past there have been issues with rodents/mice. Several people offered to show us dead mice in the various mouse traps. However, when they opened the mouse trap there were no dead mice present. The kitchen worker stated that although there have been problems with mice in the past, the jail does pest remediation twice per week and it has been effective in addressing the rodent issue. Several of the kitchen workers stated that they take pride in working in the kitchen because it gives them the ability to leave the pod and have a sense of responsibility. They further stated that the kitchen workers do an exceptional job of cleaning the kitchen because they eat the food that is prepared in the kitchen. E.J., one of the kitchen workers, stated that the kitchen workers are not permitted to leave the kitchen until it is thoroughly cleaned and he has not observed any problems with roaches. However, E.J. offered to show me places where he believed black mold existed. Upon viewing the area on the floor E.J. conceded that the stains on the floor were more consistent with glue from laminate flooring that had previously been removed. During the kitchen tour I asked Captain Frank about the kitchen workers' ability to tamper with the food that is delivered to the various pods. She indicated that although it is possible for the workers to tamper with the food trays, they really do not know where the individual trays will be taken so that tends to disincentivize the workers. Captain Frank also explained that meals were prepared daily for incarcerated individuals with dietary restrictions. She stated that because those trays have the

names of the intended recipients of the trays, there is an increased concern that contraband might be passed. Captain Frank stated that due to this concern, the officers pay special attention to the process for preparing and delivering the meals with special dietary restrictions. Prior to leaving the kitchen area, E.J. stated that although he had spent time in the Westmoreland County Jail and the Allegheny County Jail, the officers in the ACJ are far more respectful and kinder. He further stated that he believes that the majority of the officers in the ACJ are more committed to seeing people succeed and they have the incarcerated individuals' best interests at heart.

After leaving the kitchen area, we toured the intake area of the ACJ with the assistance of Sgt. Gerber. During the tour of the intake department, Sgt. Gerber showed us the holding cells where people are taken to when they are brought to the ACJ. Parties are searched and the officers take possession of any items of value. The incarcerated individuals are given a temporary ID bracelet and they are required to give the officers their shoes, and any other items that pose a risk for strangulation. Then the officers that have been trained are required to complete a review screening of each person that is brought into the ACJ. Following the review screening, each person must pass through the body scanner for a more in-depth search to detect contraband. Females are required to submit to a pregnancy test. If a female is pregnant, she is required to complete a drug screen to identify any medications or controlled substances that she is currently taking. Each person is fingerprinted and checked for outstanding warrants and the process for determining a bail recommendation is initiated. Parties are then required to appear before the Magistrate to receive a copy of their criminal complaint and a bail recommendation. Incarcerated individuals that receive a non-monetary bail recommendation are released from the ACJ with information regarding their next scheduled court date. Individuals that are not released receive a health screen done by a medical professional as well as physical assessment to identify any medications that the person is currently taking. Sgt. Gerber indicated that approximately one hundred people are seen by the medical professionals each day in the intake department. Everyone will stay in the intake department for a minimum of eight hours to allow them the opportunity to post bail. The incarcerated individuals that fail to secure a release will ultimately be taken to one of the pods in the ACJ and they will be quarantined for a minimum of 10 days to ensure that they do not have COVID. During our tour, we met three people working in the intake area. The workers were asked about their experience in the ACJ and everyone stated that they felt that they were treated with respect by the officers. They also stated that they enjoyed working in the intake department because it gets them off their pods and keeps them busy. The three men said that there are always a few incarcerated individuals working in the intake department every hour of the day. One of the individuals further stated that the food in the ACJ was better than the food in the Westmoreland County Jail, since he had spent time in both facilities. Prior to concluding the tour of the intake department, Sgt. Gerber indicated that he really enjoyed his job, and he has worked in the ACJ for the past twelve years. He further stated that his job has enabled him to provide for his family and although every job has its pros and cons, he likes his job, and he would apply to work in the ACJ again if given the opportunity.

After leaving the intake department, we toured the female pod. Captain Frank informed us that there is a restrictive housing unit and a detox section on the females' pod. The women were showering so we were unable to spend much time on the pod. We then toured the medical pod located on the fifth floor. Upon arriving on the fifth floor, we spoke with an officer that indicated that he enjoyed working at the ACJ. He stated that he has been working on the medical pod for approximately one year, and that men and women are housed in the medical unit. The officer stated that they see a large number of people with chronic illnesses and a lot of the people on the medical unit are there for gunshot wounds and open

wounds that require medical attention. Incarcerated individuals that are wheelchair bound are housed on the medical pod along with the people with the most severe cases of detox. There are currently two handicap accessible cells on the pod and in some instances, pregnant women are assigned to the medical pod as well. He stated that the incarcerated individuals in the ACJ receive good medical care and attention and when someone requires medical attention that exceeds their capabilities, they are transferred to the hospital. However, he did express concern regarding their inability to treat some of the people in the ACJ due to their reluctance to provide truthful information related to their substance abuse, and medical history. The officer also stated that there are medical staff present on the pod twenty-four hours per day.

We left the medical pod and toured the pod located on 5C, where we met an officer named Paul. Paul indicated that he has a reputation for being very truthful, which has resulted in him not being a favorite employee in the ACJ. He went on to state that one of the issues that is problematic is the lack of communication between the jail administration and the employees. Paul felt that the staff are not consulted prior to the administration's decision to change policies and procedures in the ACJ. Also, Paul felt that they did not have enough trained staff on the mental health pod. Nevertheless, Paul informed us that incarcerated individuals in the ACJ with a history of mental health issues are routinely referred to 5C. Additionally, officers have the ability to make an initial referral for a person to be transferred to the Mental Health pod, but all referrals must be approved by the medical team. Paul further stated that most of the people housed on 5C really should be in a Mental Health Facility and not the ACJ. Prior to leaving the pod, we were permitted to see one of the suicide prevention cells, which was recently completed. The floor, ceiling, and walls were completely padded to prevent anyone from injuring themselves while housed in the cell.

Lastly, we toured the Juvenile pod where juveniles under the age of 18 are housed. W.S., the officer assigned to the juvenile pod stated that the juveniles would have school daily on the pod during the COVID pandemic. However, the juveniles are currently permitted to attend school on a daily basis on level one. We learned that the juveniles on the pod tend to be more mischievous and disrespectful than the older, more mature individuals in the ACJ. W.S. attributed those behaviors to immaturity. Also, there were a number of juveniles in Restrictive Housing on the pod due to excessive horseplay and failing to comply with the rules. Steve questioned W.S. about female juveniles in the ACJ and W.S. indicated that the females are housed separately from the males, although juvenile females typically do not spend much time in the ACJ since they are released more quickly than the males. W.S. also said that he had no complaints about his job. He said that he would take the job over again because he enjoys the job. He has great benefits, and the job has enabled him to earn a good living. W.S. further stated that although the job can be stressful at times, the primary obstacle to hiring and maintaining employees is the forced overtime.

We concluded our tour and Captain Frank escorted us to the Warden's office to gather our belongings.