

I have served this agency, this state, for 33 years. I am proud to have worked for and help build what I believe to be the best correctional system in the nation. We have been recognized nationally and internationally for applying research and data-based principles in our practice, our innovation in developing new programs and practices to serve our mission, and perhaps most importantly, our humanity.

Washington State DOC pioneered or was an early adopter of direct supervision in prisons, intensive basic training and mentoring for staff, risk and needs assessment for offenders, sustainability and habitat restoration programs in prisons, offender family councils and events, a system-wide safety committee structure, swift and certain community supervision practices, system-wide cognitive behavioral programs for offenders on supervision, use of Medicaid and enrollment in Affordable Care Act for offenders, systemic approaches to reducing solitary confinement, and partnerships with programs such as the Post Prison Education Project, The IF Project and countless other community organizations, non-profits and government agencies.

Most of these innovations were not the result of legislation or litigation, the drivers of change in many correctional agencies. Rather, these were envisioned by leaders, both formal and informal, and developed and implemented by staff who wanted to make their agency better. To serve the public and the organization. Some of these were born out of tragedy, such as the death of correctional officer Jayme Biendl. This is an agency that self-reflects and rather than only assign blame to individuals, strives to understand where the system failed and what can be implemented to address that failure.

What we recognize is that no system is ever perfect. There are constant reminders of this, most small, but others that shake our foundation, such as the murder of a staff or an error in sentence calculations. There are no perfect leaders or perfect performance management systems that will stop disruptions from occurring. What anyone with experience working in complex organizations knows is that there are too many variables. What we can do is foster a culture that recognizes and responds to disruptors. A culture that strives to constantly be better. A culture that recognizes that failures will occur but is prepared to act swiftly and decisively to respond and adjust.

In December, I learned that a major failure had occurred in this agency. As I would approach any other crisis, I mobilized resources to address the immediate risk, assess future needs, and investigate the system vulnerabilities that allowed this failure to occur. We mobilized this agency as it should have been in 2012 when this error was originally discovered. As with any crisis of this scale, the corrective action will continue for months if not years.

What we discovered last December was a system failure. A tragic system failure. While the leaders of this state have called for the heads of the individuals responsible and have wasted no time in hiring investigators to make this determination, understanding the system failure that occurred will take an earnest self-examination. Change is not made in front of a TV camera, or in a hearing, or through suggestions on a website. Improvement is a commitment of people dedicated to their work. It's done year round, not in legislative sessions.

I notify you now of my resignation. I hope it helps meet your need for blood. I hope it gives you fodder for the press and fulfills your political needs so you can let this agency, our agency, heal. Your posturing does a grave injustice to the 8,200 staff who work for this agency. You stymie open dialogue and discourage truth-telling with your blaming and shaming. It exposes your ignorance of the complexity of the work of state government.

What I am certain of, is that this agency has a strong foundation. The damage that has been done to the department by this error, though it will take time, will make it better if it is allowed to address this as a system failure and fix the issues this crisis has exposed. I embrace the opportunity to speak candidly when I am subpoenaed to come before your committee.

It has been an honor to serve this agency and this state for more than three decades.