



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

*Assistant Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW - RFK
Washington, DC 20530*

May 19, 2026

Via Email

The Honorable Bob Ferguson
Office of the Governor
416 Sid Snyder Avenue SW, Suite 200
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Investigation of Washington Corrections Center for Women in Gig Harbor

Dear Governor Ferguson:

I write to inform you that the United States Department of Justice is commencing an investigation into Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) operated by the Washington State Department of Corrections (WDOC). The Department will conduct this investigation pursuant to the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA), 42 U.S.C. § 1997, to determine whether WCCW is engaged in a pattern or practice of depriving female prisoners of rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States. This is official notice as required by CRIPA.

Our investigation is based on information that WCCW has failed to protect female prisoners from sexual and physical violence, harassment, voyeurism, and intimidation from male prisoners who identify as female and who WDOC has housed at WCCW. Our investigation will include a comprehensive review of all relevant WCCW and WDOC policies and practices, and any related evidence that may be relevant to the allegations of harm that have been reported.

We have not reached any conclusions about the subject matter of the investigation. During the investigation, we will consider all relevant information, including the efforts Washington has taken to ensure compliance with the Constitution. We encourage the State to cooperate with our investigation and assure you that we will seek to minimize any potential disruption our investigation may have on WCCW and WDOC operations.

If we ultimately determine that there are no constitutional violations present at this facility, we will notify you that we are closing the investigation. If we determine that there are systemic violations, we will inform you of our findings and attempt to work with the State to remedy those violations. In our many years of civil rights enforcement, the good faith efforts of jurisdictions to work with us have routinely enabled us to resolve our claims without resorting to contested litigation.

Attorneys from the Civil Rights Division and the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington will be handling this investigation. They will contact your office to discuss the next steps. You may reach Patrick McCarthy, the Acting Chief of the Special Litigation Section, at Patrick.McCarthy@usdoj.gov.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Regards,



Harmeet K. Dhillon
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

cc: Hon. Nick Brown
Attorney General
Washington

Hon. Tim Lang
Secretary
Washington State Department of Corrections

Bill Swain
Superintendent
Washington Corrections Center for Women