



STATE OF MICHIGAN
 DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
 LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
 GOVERNOR

HEIDI E. WASHINGTON
 DIRECTOR

June 18, 2026

Congresswoman Debbie Dingell
 102 Cannon House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Dingell:

Thank you for your letter dated June 8, 2026, to Governor Gretchen Whitmer related to the ongoing public discussion about the Women’s Huron Valley (WHV) Correctional Facility. On behalf of the Governor and the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC), I am pleased to provide the following information in response.

Please allow me to start by stating clearly and unequivocally that the Michigan MDOC, its employees, and partners, understand the significant responsibility placed upon us to operate safe, humane, and effective correctional facilities that are focused on the long-term positive outcomes of those placed under the Department’s jurisdiction.

Over the last decade, the MDOC has established itself as a national leader in several key areas of corrections, including providing high-quality education and programming and ensuring access to cutting-edge support like Medication Assisted Treatments, all while safely reducing the prison population and achieving the lowest recidivism rates in our state’s history. WHV reflects several elements of that important work, and the result is that the population there has safely declined by over 11% since 2020.

Even as we have made progress on these goals, we recognize that prison remains a complicated and at times challenging environment, particularly as many in the population we serve have increasingly complex needs. Over the past several weeks, MDOC leadership including myself, as well as key staff from other areas of the department such as Healthcare, have been at the facility on a daily basis to identify ways in which these challenges can be met to create a better setting for those who reside and work there. We recognize there is work to be done on several key issues, including improving communication, clarifying/simplifying processes, and ensuring that all interactions start and end with an expectation of respect and dignity for all parties. I remain fully committed to these goals and will continue to update stakeholders and the public on our progress at the facility.

In response to your specific questions/concerns:

1. Prisoner grievances are a standard mechanism for those that are incarcerated to object to/appeal a decision or action by MDOC staff. In the past 5 years, incarcerated individuals have filed grievances relating to conditions at WHV, as well as access to medical care. These grievances are placed in broad categories, so they may not be specific to the concerns raised in your letter. After filing a grievance, an incarcerated person may first appeal the resulting decision at the facility and if they are still unsatisfied, may appeal the issue to “Step III”, resulting in a review within the MDOC’s Bureau of Legal Affairs. Below are the number of Step III grievances in the broad categories of “Conditions of Confinement/Facility” and “Healthcare”.

Women’s Huron Valley “Step III” Grievances						
Category by Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Conditions of Confinement	19	19	10	7	13	20
Healthcare	12	23	25	14	25	6

2. The facility is subject to routine cleaning as well as cleaning/sanitation reviews. In addition, an annual comprehensive inspection is completed by a Sanitarian for each facility. That report is shared with the facility and the facility must create a response plan to address any deficiencies in the inspection findings.

Food preparation/service areas are subject to inspections on each shift by staff in the area, daily inspections by the Food Service Supervisor, weekly inspections by the Food Service Director, monthly inspections by the Facility Administrative Manager, and quarterly inspections by a Regional Food Service Manager. Finally, an annual unannounced food service inspection is carried out by a Sanitarian

WHV has had two special environmental tests (2022 and 2026) conducted by outside experts due to active litigation and plaintiffs have also conducted testing. The only document currently available has been shared on the MDOC's new transparency website at www.michigan.gov/corrections/transparency. To date, the plaintiff has not shared a summary of their testing results.

3. As a continuously operating facility, WHV undergoes daily cleaning, as well as preventative maintenance and physical plant improvement projects. While providing an exhaustive list of all projects would be difficult, the following key projects have been started or completed over the past year.
 - a. Boiler Replacement Project/Heat Exchanger Replacement – Multiple Phases in process.
 - b. Roof Replacement Project – Two housing units and several common use buildings. Project is in process.
 - c. HVAC Balancing Project/Duct Cleaning – Multiple housing units in process.
4. All MDOC staff have an obligation under the terms of their employment to immediately address safety issues, either directly or by bringing the matter to the attention of the appropriate staff that would have the obligation to resolve the issue (e.g. maintenance staff). The nature of a safety concern dictates the process for addressing it, but the MDOC documents all concerns, informs the appropriate staff, reviews the concern, and creates a response plan which would include work orders for MDOC staff or the use of appropriate outside contractors.
5. There are several different ways in which an incarcerated individual accesses medical care within the facility.
 - a. All individuals are assessed upon intake and throughout their term of incarceration. This includes at a minimum, an annual check-up, but those with known health conditions are placed on a chronic care plan that establishes more regular healthcare encounters throughout the year.
 - b. Individuals may request to see healthcare at any time by submitting a written request. This request is reviewed within one business day and triaged as emergent (seen immediately), urgent (seen no later than the next business day), or routine (seen within 5 business days if an appointment is necessary).
 - c. Individuals may verbally tell any staff if they believe they or another incarcerated person is having a physical or behavioral health emergency, including if someone has suffered an injury and staff will immediately contact healthcare to begin the assessment and care process. Depending on the person's condition, healthcare staff will either report to that area of the facility or the individual will be transported to one of the healthcare areas of the prison. After initial assessment, if emergency medical care is required, outside emergency medical services would be contacted and the individual would be transferred to an emergency department in a local hospital for care.
 - d. Staff who identify an individual who may be undergoing a physical or behavioral health emergency must immediately request assistance from healthcare. The process shared above, including potential transfer to an outside emergency department, would be utilized if medically necessary.
6. The MDOC takes the responsibility of providing medically appropriate care seriously and all MDOC staff have an obligation to ensure access to appropriate care. If an incarcerated individual believes that appropriate healthcare services have not been provided, after trying to resolve with appropriate staff they may then file a grievance. If they disagree with the grievance response, they can appeal the grievance through two additional steps as part of the process of exhausting their administrative remedies. If an incarcerated person believes an issue remains unresolved after exhausting their administrative remedies, they may pursue civil litigation.
7. As everyone at the facility receives an annual health screening and can receive health services including vaccines, flu shots, etc., effectively everyone in the facility has had the opportunity to receive some form of medical care each year.

Many individuals need more regular or more intensive physical or mental behavioral health care and as a result will have a higher number of healthcare encounters during the year. Healthcare staff review all requests for healthcare services to triage them to be seen by healthcare staff. The MDOC has an obligation under policy and the US Constitution to provide medically necessary care. Individual patients may disagree with the categorization/timing of appointments or the results/treatment plans and may choose to submit a grievance. The MDOC does review all claims of insufficient care that are raised through the grievance process and if it is determined appropriate care was not provided, that issue would be addressed and staff would be subject to investigation and potential discipline.

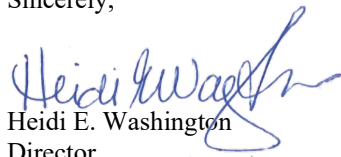
8. Active investigations are ongoing into the deaths of Rebecca Fackler, Khiara Howard, and Ashley Hoath. As all incarcerated individuals have access to healthcare services at the facility, an element of the investigations is reviewing interactions in the period prior to the deaths to ensure that all policies were properly followed, including by healthcare staff. We ask that the public wait for the investigation results to be released, as there appear to be various and at times conflicting public narratives about these cases that may not be supported by the actual evidence.
9. These investigations are performed by an experienced investigator from the MDOC's Internal Affairs Division. The investigator is located at a worksite outside of WHV, reports to a supervisor outside of WHY, and had no prior involvement with the staff response under review. As part of this process, the investigator is gathering evidence, interviewing potential witnesses (employees, contractors, and incarcerated individuals) and obtaining information from outside agencies such as Michigan State Police and the medical examiner when they become available. All MDOC staff who are subjects of, or witnesses in, an investigation are obligated to participate in the investigation and provide truthful information. Failing to do so is a work rule violation that could result in discipline up to and including termination from the State. The investigator is experienced and independent of the facility with a focus solely on determining the facts surrounding these unexpected deaths.
10. A listing of deaths that have occurred at WHV since 2015 is included as a separate document. As the only women's prison in the state, the facility houses a diverse population, including those serving natural life and other long sentences, as well as all females with complex health needs. The enclosed list does not include names to protect the privacy of those who have passed and their families.
11. The MDOC is continually monitoring the operations of all facilities. We are not aware of any specific threats to the health of those at the facility, but it remains important that health services are adequately funded at all MDOC facilities, that the MDOC is able to continually hire qualified healthcare employees for key roles, and that necessary maintenance and upgrades of the facility's infrastructure are not deferred due to a lack of adequate funding.

A broader concern, which the MDOC has been acting on for several years, is the introduction and use of drugs within our facilities, particularly synthetic drugs that present a risk to incarcerated individuals and staff who may encounter them. The MDOC has implemented several policy changes in direct response to these drugs, while also working with legislative partners to invest in new contraband interdiction technologies, including item scanners for all MDOC facilities. While these steps have helped close off potential avenues for these drugs to enter facilities, those seeking to engage in this illegal behavior continue to develop new approaches, requiring vigilance on the part of the department and continued support for policies and technologies that protect everyone within the facilities.

We are pleased with the support we have received from our state-level legislative partners in these areas over the past several years, but it is important that future state budgets fully invest in meeting the healthcare, programming, and safety needs of those incarcerated at WHV, along with the staffing needs of the department throughout the state.

Once again, I thank you for your ongoing attention to these matters and look forward to keeping you up to date on the MDOC's efforts.

Sincerely,



Heidi E. Washington
Director