



For immediate release
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Incarcerated Transgender Woman Can Pursue Case for Appropriate Medical Care

A U.S. district court judge in Massachusetts has denied the government's request to dismiss the case of Vanessa Adams, a Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) inmate with gender identity disorder (GID). For years, the BOP denied Ms. Adams treatment for her serious medical condition. As a result, Ms. Adams attempted suicide multiple times when prison doctors failed to provide any treatment. She eventually removed her own genitals. Ms. Adams now challenges the federal policy that prison doctors and other medical providers used to justify the denial of her treatment.

At issue is BOP's so-called "freeze frame" policy in which treatment for any prisoner with gender identity disorder is frozen at the level being provided when he or she entered BOP. In other words, because Ms. Adams did not receive treatment for GID before being incarcerated, BOP would not provide it to her after her incarceration.

Vanessa Adams is being represented by Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), Florida Institutional Legal Services (FILS), the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), and Bingham McCutchen LLP. The organizations hold the position that people should receive medically-necessary treatment for serious health conditions while in our nation's prison system, including transgender-related health needs.

"Unfortunately, despite the fact that GID is well-recognized as a serious medical condition, individuals with GID face stigma and bias. In Vanessa's case, stigma and bias alone have deprived her of the medical attention she needs. By filing this case, she seeks to ensure that transgender inmates with serious medical needs get appropriate care, just as prisoners with heart conditions and diabetes should," said Jennifer L. Levi, Transgender Rights Project Director for GLAD.

Cassandra Capobianco of Florida Institutional Legal Services added, "It is critical not only for Vanessa's health and safety but for the good of other prisoners that BOP's policy be changed."

"We're pleased that the judge recognized the inhumanity of the BOP policy, and that Vanessa will have her day in court," said Shannon Minter, Legal Director of NCLR.

In its June 7 ruling, the Court rejected BOP's argument that Ms. Adams' claim should be invalidated because the prison finally started her on hormones. Citing the BOP's consistently callous conduct toward Ms. Adams, the fact that BOP could stop Ms. Adams' treatment at any

time, and the fact that BOP continues to enforce its freeze-frame policy, the Court ruled that the question of the constitutionality of the policy remains open.

This case will now in all likelihood proceed to trial.

More information about *Adams v. Federal Bureau of Prisons*, including the complaint and the decision, can be found at www.glad.org and www.nclrights.org.

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