

STATEMENT OF DEPUTY SHERIFF BART LANNI

DEPUTY SHERIFF LANNI: Good afternoon. I'm going to make this kind of brief. The Sheriff has basically covered a lot of things that L.A. County does.

CHAIRMAN WALTON: Can you move the mike over.

We're going to take a one-minute recess.

Fine.

(Recess taken.)

CHAIRMAN WALTON: Thank you. Sorry.

DEPUTY SHERIFF LANNI: Mr. Lanni.

I'll kind of keep this brief since a lot of what I had to say has already been mentioned by the Sheriff.

But one of the things that -- I almost felt like I was falling back in the dark ages here today, listening to some of this testimony.

When you talk about best practice, there is no doubt that the gay and transgender individuals in the county jail system are subject to a lot of harassment and sexual assault. And over the years I've been involved with that community for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in protecting those individuals.

What I want to focus on here today is the practice that my sheriff allows in our county, which is a classification process as the inmates come through the inmate reception center. Last year we

had about 225,000 people come through that system that needed to be classified. About 22,000 of those people were special handles. The groups of individuals that my --

CHAIRMAN WALTON: Were special what?

DEPUTY SHERIFF LANNI: Special-handle inmates, whether that be K-10s, whatever, that need to be separated from the general population.

We also separate out the gay and transgender inmates in our population, which once they come through the system and identify themselves, then they come through a separate classification system, which my partner and I take the handle on and run.

What this does for the gay and transgender inmates in jail -- for instance, the other day I had a transgender individual come in and tell me that there was an attempted rape by another individual that had recently been incarcerated in our system and was in a holding tank that I was about to interview. That effectively enables me to separate those two individuals so that that individual who did attempt to rape this transgender person in prison won't be able to get together.

We have a system much like the sheriff identified -- low, medium and high -- but it's a number-based system, one through four is minimum, five through seven would be mediums, and then eight and nines high. But in the gay and transgender

areas, all those inmates are put in there together, and my partner and I monitor those three dorms continuously. We monitor them for race so that there's an even balance and -- you know, besides the fact of the gender of those individuals. And that practice really protects these people immensely.

There's a number of other ways in which we protect, you know, the vast majority of the inmates in jails: Through the wristband system that we use. Okay. We've currently gone to an ID badge for inmates with their photos on it, but the IDs and the wristbands enable the deputies in our system to identify any problems those inmates may have no matter where they go. All we got to do is jump on the system, check it out. And there's different screens they can go to to identify the different needs of those individuals.

You definitely need to sit down and listen to the inmates and afford them the opportunity to tell you their problem, whatever that problem may be.

As far as the complaint process, I know -- for example, I get plenty of complaints from the inmates that I deal with on a continuous basis. I make photocopies of those complaints the times that I receive them, and then when I hand those off to the sergeants or the lieutenant, whoever that happens to be, I document that. And then a lot of times I do a follow-up, say "Hey, boss, what happened with that particular complaint," or the sergeant or whatever.

So there are means to control it. We also put -- attach control numbers on those complaints so that they can be followed.

There were a lot of people here today asking for an outside agency to come in and look at what we do. On a daily basis, our program for -- we call them K-11s for the gay and transgender inmates, and that K-11 number was given to the inmates not to label them, but to do away with names and taunting of those inmates.

A long time ago, when they used to come through IRC, the inmates would be given a pen, a separate pin that would be labeled a homo pin or the faggot pin. So in order to do away with the stereotypes and all that stuff, we went to the K-11 term. So now when, you know, deputies are in the hallway escorting a line of transgender or gay inmates, they say, you know, we have a line of K-11s going through, and you don't even have to use those terms.

A lot of times there's a feeling that an issue of labeling -- and if I could guarantee you that I can protect all those inmates and this was a perfect world, then I would say do away with all the labels, dress everybody the same. But that's not going to happen. And our "K-11" term and the fact that we dress out our gay and transgender inmates in a different color readily identifies them to all

deputies in our system, and that enables them to protect them.

CHAIRMAN WALTON: And do you have a sufficient number of transgender/gay detainees at any given time where your response to the situation doesn't result in isolated confinement?

DEPUTY SHERIFF LANNI: Right now the total amount of people -- it runs about 320 right now. That's the total. And that's not to say that we don't have gay men in general population who have not self-identified, okay? But our total right now, which are housed in dorm areas that are overseen by officers, it's kind of a -- it's not a direct-supervision idea like the sheriff talked about, because they're up in the booth and they have to look out into the dorm, but on any given day it's not unusual for my partner and I to go in that dorm, walk in there, talk to the inmates and find out what's going on.

CHAIRMAN WALTON: So you are housing transgender-, gay-population people together?

DEPUTY SHERIFF LANNI: Yes.

There was separation of transgender inmates and the gay inmates when they were up in our north correctional facility. One of the issues for the transgender was the services that were being provided to the regular gay males were not afforded to the transgenders. And they said that we're no different than they are, why are we being separated out?

So when I was asked -- because I had been on the women's side for about four years, and then I came back because the gentleman that was handling it retired and the department came and asked me to do it again. So when I brought them back down from up north, I put them all together.

And that seems to work rather well, especially the way we monitor the population. They've got to be the most scrutinized population by my partner and I for their protection.

CHAIRMAN WALTON: In large communities, where there's a large gay/transgender population, it works. It's a challenge for us because many communities are different and you may end up basically isolating people in certain situations where you don't have large populations, and that's obviously a real challenge for some facilities.

DEPUTY SHERIFF LANNI: Well, I think that at the risk of those people being subjects of sexual abuse -- I still think you can afford them the same opportunities -- obviously, if you have one individual in a small town, that's going to be a problem. But I think that the same services -- for instance, the program that was developed for the gay and transgender inmates up there which was the Smart Program came out of a direct result of these individuals not getting services, just like you're talking about.

So we started, my partner and I, that program so that they would be able to get those services. In order to educate on issues of HIV, the condom-distribution issue, we took a lot of heat over that issue, but it's not about having sex -- and we also have signs right in the dorms, right over the collection boxes for the condoms after they're used, that say, you know, it's against the law to have sex in jail. If you get caught, we will write the appropriate reports, and a jail investigation has also taught the deputies on collection of evidence and all this type of thing. So we're not promoting sex.

But when you look at the -- or our global community and these people that are going back out into the community, they're having sex in jail. Right now we offer the gay and transgender inmates STD testing. On all the inmates that come in to this unit, the K-11 unit, they all get tested. We have a huge outbreak of syphilis down there right now, okay? So everybody gets tested. They can get tested for HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia.

And if you take, for example, the people that experiment while they're in jail, which could be your brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, whoever that is, and you go back out to their family members and spread that disease, I think it's prudent to distribute those condoms to prevent that disease.