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Governor Ferguson
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Relieving Juvenile System Overcrowding by Reopening the Naselle Youth Camp

Dear Governor Ferguson,

As we approach a new legislative session, I would like to request the opportunity to meet and discuss an issue affecting not only the 19th Legislative District, but Washington's entire juvenile rehabilitation system.

Just two years after the Naselle Youth Camp's closure, your predecessor noted an "avalanche" of new offenders were entering the state's juvenile justice system. The ruinous effects of JR-25 combined with the decision to shutter the Naselle Youth Camp have forced Green Hill to operate above safe operational capacity for three years now.

As Attorney General you banned the punitive practice of solitary confinement for juveniles. I hope you would agree that placing 18 and 19 year old boys in overcrowded rehabilitation facilities with men as old as 25 is similarly inconsistent with the state's goal of rehabilitation.

Youth offenders, their families, and ultimately, the public are left dealing with the consequences of these conditions, while taxpayers continue to foot the bill for keeping the Naselle Youth Camp in warm closure. At a time when DCYF and other state agencies have been directed to reduce spending, continuing to pour public resources into an unused facility is increasingly difficult to justify.

It is time to determine the best use of the Naselle Youth Camp. Whether that means reactivating the facility which housed 150 detainees at its peak or pursuing another option such as demolition.

I respectfully request a meeting to discuss this facility's future and its potential role in addressing the challenges facing our juvenile rehabilitation system. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Senator Jeff Wilson
19th Legislative District