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New Proposal Will Reform Extreme and Devastating Solitary Confinement Practices in Illinois Prisons

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Illinois House Bill #0182 named for former inmate Anthony Gay who was tortured with 20 years in isolation

CHICAGO, IL – Romanucci & Blandin, LLC and Illinois State Representative La Shawn Ford (D-Chicago, 8th District) together announce a proposal to reform the Illinois Department of Corrections practice of solitary confinement for inmates, which is an unconstitutional, cruel and unusual punishment, particularly for inmates with mental health conditions. The Anthony Gay Isolated Confinement Restriction Act, introduced by Rep. Ford, will be named for a former inmate Anthony Gay who was held in solitary confinement for two decades, including 15 years of a prolonged sentence as a punishment for behavior resulting from his isolation. During his extreme isolation, he was denied appropriate and necessary mental health treatment which made it impossible for Gay to comport with prison rules and regulations, leading him to brutally mutilate himself countless times and endure years of mental and physical torture.

The Anthony Gay Isolated Confinement Restriction Act, would:

-Limit a committed person to no more than 10 consecutive days in isolated confinement in a 180-day period

-Provide that when out of cell, committed persons have access to activities such as group therapy, medical appointments, meals, educational classes, job assignments, visits and exercise, gymnasium or yard time

-Ensure transparency with quarterly reports by the Illinois Department of Corrections on the use of isolated confinement

The Isolated Confinement Restriction Act is now with the Illinois House of Representatives Judiciary-Criminal Committee and can be read [here](#).

“We call on Illinois lawmakers and Governor J.B. Pritzker to expedite the passage and signing of the Anthony Gay Isolated Confinement Restriction Act to create a more humane environment and end this devastating and unconstitutional practice,” said Rep. Ford. “I value the conversations I have had with Illinois Department of Corrections Acting Director Rob Jeffreys, and look forward to working with him to create this much-needed reform.”

"Being in solitary confinement for decades psychologically rocked me to the core. No one should be subjected to such torture. We must act now to stop it," said former solitary confinement inmate Anthony Gay. "My personal mission is to educate and inspire America to help those solitary confinement inmates heal, learn and rebuild themselves in order to become productive citizens."

Anthony Gay was released in August of 2018, and has filed a federal lawsuit against former Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) director John Baldwin, current IDOC director Rob Jeffreys, Wexford Health Sources, a private company that provides medical and mental health care to IDOC inmates, the wardens and assistant wardens of institutions at which Anthony Gay was imprisoned, and several employees of IDOC and Wexford.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois, charges the Defendants with torture of Gay, violating the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Rehabilitation Act. It also alleges that the Plaintiff's Fourteenth Amendment rights were violated.

The State's treatment of Gay increased his torture and caused him to take erratic and irrational actions, which included extensive sampling of repeated and severe self-mutilation, including cuts to the Plaintiff's scrotum, arms, legs, and eyelids. Rather than providing the necessary and essential psychiatric care, the State pursued criminal charges against Gay, which extended his prison sentence for years and caused his mental condition to deteriorate in a blatant violation of his constitutional rights, the lawsuit states.

"We have to hold the system accountable for a humane standard of treatment for its inmates and we cannot let other inmates endure the same torture Anthony Gay was subjected to," said Gay's attorney, Nicolette Ward at Romanucci & Blandin, LLC. "He clearly was in desperate need of mental healthcare but, instead, was denied human contact and vital treatment for decades. This treatment can – and must- change."

About Romanucci & Blandin, LLC

Romanucci & Blandin has been rated as a leading civil trial practice law firm in Chicago concentrating in catastrophic personal injury, medical malpractice, police misconduct, civil rights and mass tort matters. The attorneys at the Chicago law firm represent individuals and their families in catastrophic personal injury matters, wrongful death and workers' compensation cases. The cases that are referred to Romanucci & Blandin involve accidents or injuries which occurred due to negligence and carelessness on the part of individuals, governmental bodies and corporations of all sizes. Since its inception over 20 years ago, Romanucci & Blandin has secured more than \$500 million in verdicts and settlements on behalf of their clients across the country. For more information about Romanucci & Blandin, please visit www.rblaw.net or call (312) 458-1000.