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**BUENA VISTA CORRECTIONAL FACILITY PROTECTIVE CUSTODY UNIT
INVESTIGATION REVEALS INHUMANE PRISON CONDITIONS, DENVER LAW'S
CIVIL RIGHTS CLINIC REPORT CALLS FOR WIDESPREAD REFORM**

Denver, CO — A two-year investigation reveals the Buena Vista Correctional Facility Protective Custody Unit (“BVCF PC Unit”)—created to ensure the safety of some of the most vulnerable people in the Colorado Department of Corrections (“CDOC”)—is instead a cramped, violent hallway where people are locked away without adequate space or medical care and almost entirely denied rehabilitative and vocational opportunities. Many people in the BVCF PC Unit live there because they aided the government in criminal prosecutions or renounced their gang membership. The report, **“Abused and Forgotten: Life Inside the BVCF Protective Custody Hallway,”** describes the disturbing findings of the investigation and proposals for reform.

For two years, student attorneys in University of Denver Sturm College of Law’s Civil Rights Clinic (“Clinic”) investigated the conditions in BVCF PC Unit after receiving repeated complaints about it. The Clinic’s investigation yielded concerning results: 1) people in the BVCF PC Unit are serving longer sentences because they cannot access programming *required* for parole; 2) there is no emergency alert system despite frequent and severe emergencies in the unit; 3) staff members are verbally and physically abusive to incarcerated people; 4) people in the unit are excluded from nearly all rehabilitative opportunities, including drug and alcohol treatment; and 5) physical violence is rampant and largely unaddressed. The report highlights how these inhumane conditions create a bleak and dangerous environment that may violate the constitutional rights of the people forced to live in the BVCF PC Unit. **“Everyone deserves to be safe in prison. These vulnerable people, who in some cases have assisted the government, should also be able to serve their time safely. Instead, the CDOC inflicts further punishment on them by locking them in a cramped hallway and prohibiting them from working and participating in treatment and rehabilitative programming. What kind of incentive is that to do the right thing?”** said the Clinic’s Director, Laura Rovner.

The report urges the CDOC and the Colorado Legislature to act *immediately* to stem the violence and deteriorative impacts of the conditions in the PC Unit. It calls for three possible courses of action for CDOC: 1) creating a specialized protective custody facility; 2) moving the PC Unit to a location that is able to provide for the needs of the people in the Unit, including programming necessary for parole; or 3) making substantial improvements to the existing BVCF PC Unit. In addition to other recommendations outlined in the report, the Clinic calls for the CDOC to equip all protective custody cells and common areas with an emergency notification system.

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