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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NJDOC REACHES SETTLEMENT WITH PLAINTIFFS ON EDNA MAHAN SEXUAL ASSAULT MISCONDUCT LITIGATION STEMMING FROM 2014

April 7, 2021– Trenton, New Jersey – The New Jersey Department of Corrections (“NJDOC”) and private plaintiffs’ counsel representing current and former female inmates today announced a global resolution of 22 civil litigations against NJDOC and its representatives concerning longstanding allegations of sexual abuse and harassment at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women (“EMCFW”) that have been pending since 2017.

The settlement, which was reached during mediation with the Honorable Diane M. Welsh (ret.), resolves both individual claims for those inmates who claim to have been direct victims of sexual abuse, harassment, or retaliation, as well as a class of all inmates assigned to EMCFW since January 1, 2014. This resolution encompasses two class action complaints filed on behalf of the current and former inmate population of EMCFW, plus 20 individual complaints involving the specific claims of 22 current or former inmates.

In total, the settlement provides up to \$20,835,600 in damages and attorneys’ fees for women who were either directly impacted by sexual misconduct or who were incarcerated in the facility between 2014 and the date of court approval of the settlement. This unprecedented amount of compensation will provide direct relief to those who were impacted by the criminal conduct of certain former NJDOC employees assigned to EMCFW.

In addition to the financial component, the settlement confirms that NJDOC will, for the first time at EMCFW, institute a system of body cameras to be worn by NJDOC staff who regularly come in contact with inmates. This represents an important step and initiative by NJDOC to use modern technological advancements to ensure the safety and well-being of its female inmate population and to further enforce the highest standards of professional conduct among NJDOC staff.

“As the Department seeks resolution on this matter, which covers claims from inmates at EMCFW from 2014-present, this administration, under my leadership, reaffirms its commitment to operating safe and humane facilities,” said New Jersey Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq. “My administration is ushering in a new era in corrections, with safety and rehabilitation at its core. We’ve put in place various safety reforms to address concerns that have been ongoing and long before our administration, including the recent body-

worn camera project increasing oversight and accountability while reducing allegations to maintain safety within our facilities."

Counsel for plaintiffs jointly added that "[T]he settlement was reached as a result of protracted, difficult, but respectful negotiations and is among the most significant in the history of New Jersey corrections reform and that the economic and non-economic provisions are significant and will have immediate positive impacts on improving conditions throughout the institution and give the plaintiffs the opportunity to turn the page on this difficult chapter."

The next steps in the settlement process are to file a motion for court approval of the settlement and the issuance of notice of the settlement to class members.

Plaintiffs were represented in these matters by Barry Corrado & Grassi, PC of Wildwood; Mark B. Frost & Associates of Philadelphia; Stark & Stark, PC of Lawrenceville; and Williams Cedar, LLC of Haddonfield. NJDOC and its representatives were represented by Chiesa Shahnian & Giantomasi PC.

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