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## **Lack of Running Water at Jail Creates Deplorable Conditions; Assistant Public Defenders in Baltimore City File Emergency Habeas Petitions**

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For several days this week, individuals detained at the Maryland Reception, Diagnostic and Classification Center (MRDCC), an intake facility in Baltimore City run by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), have been without running water, resulting in a lack of functioning toilets and showers.

Affidavits from public defender clients at MRDCC detail the horrific conditions. On Sunday, the main pipe that carries human waste out of the facility was clogged and overflowed. For at least two days afterwards, the toilets would not flush and the sinks only dispensed hot, brown water. As a result, people were forced to remain in cells with unflushed excrement for days. At times, people were brought to portable toilets while remaining handcuffed so they could not wipe or wash themselves; at other times, they were provided with garbage bags to use as toilets in their cells. With no access to running water, they could not clean themselves and were provided with minimal bottles of water for drinking.

As of Thursday afternoon, flooding issues remained. Assistant Public Defender Deborah Levi went into the facility and observed water leaking from the ceiling of the second floor, with industrial sized trash cans overflowing with water from the leaks.

“The conditions that individuals at MRDCC have been forced to endure are beyond unconscionable,” said District Public Defender for Baltimore City Marguerite E. Lanaux. “More than 420 individuals are incarcerated at MRDCC each day, all of whom had to endure this unsafe, unsanitary environment.”

Eleven habeas petitions were filed today on behalf of individuals incarcerated at MRDCC, seeking their release in light of the constitutional violations caused by these conditions under the Fourteenth Amendment Due Process and Eighth Amendment Cruel and Unusual Punishment Clauses. Each petitioner is an OPD client in pretrial custody awaiting trial on charges lodged against them. OPD will remain vigilant until this matter is resolved.

“When the state holds someone in custody, the conditions must comply with basic human rights standards – and functional plumbing is among the most basic of those obligations,” said Maryland Public Defender Natasha M. Dartigue. “Depriving people of rudimentary health and hygiene measures is inhumane, unsafe, and well beyond what our society should tolerate. Yesterday, the Governor signed [SB 134](#) into law, establishing an Office of the Correctional Ombudsman to provide independent oversight of DPSCS facilities. The deplorable conditions at MRDCC underscore the urgent need for oversight that ensures the safety and dignity of all individuals in their custody and care.”

One of the filings is available [at this link](#). The others, which raise the same issue, can be provided upon request.

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