

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

M.C. and T.G., on behalf of themselves and all  
similarly situated individuals,

Plaintiffs,

v.

JEFFERSON COUNTY, NEW YORK, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 6:22-cv-190 (DNH/ATB)

**DECLARATION OF T [REDACTED] G [REDACTED]**

I, [REDACTED], declare as follows:

1. My name is [REDACTED]. I am 31 years old, and I live in Watertown, New York.

I am currently detained at the Jefferson County Jail.

2. I have opioid use disorder (“OUD”). I began using opioids at 23 after my daughter died. I was devastated and had no more motivation to live. To escape my depression, I started using heroin. This was incredibly destabilizing for me, especially in light of my mental health problems, which include diagnoses of bipolar disorder, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety. My mental health issues made drugs even more addicting, as heroin alleviated my feelings of pain and anxiety. Within a month of using heroin, I became addicted.

3. However, I did not want addiction to take over my life. Around a month after I started using heroin, I enrolled in a 28-day inpatient rehabilitation program. I participated in therapy sessions and other rehabilitative programming but found it ineffective at alleviating my

addiction, because there was no medication to control my drug cravings. As soon as I returned home, I started using heroin again.

4. Opioids took everything I cared about away from me. I was separated from my children and my mental health was suffering. I spent the next few years of my life in and out of rehabilitation programs. But no matter how determined I was to get sober, without any medication, I was powerless over my addiction. Therapy and detox alone were ineffective.

5. In 2016, the Credo Community Center in Watertown, New York opened its Opioid Treatment Program, which provided medication to treat OUD. I immediately enrolled and was one of the program's first patients. I knew I needed to try medication-based treatment as nothing else had helped me.

6. Ever since, I have been working with the staff, including Dr. Daniel Pisaniello and Counselor Liz Stephens at Credo, in treating my OUD. Under Credo's care, I began methadone treatment for OUD. Since then, Dr. Pisaniello has worked with me to find the appropriate methadone dosage for my illness, and by the beginning of this year I had settled on a therapeutic dosage of 20 mg of methadone per day.

7. Methadone saved my life and empowered me to stay in recovery from my addiction. With consistent treatment, my drug cravings subsided, and my anxiety lessened. I felt much more even keeled and like I could focus on one thing. My mental health significantly improved. I was able to stabilize my life. For a period of time, I went back to nursing school and was consistently working. My children, who had been living with their grandmother, even came back to live with me at one point. I felt like my life had finally returned to normal.

8. On January 20, 2022, however, my maintenance treatment was disrupted when I was arrested and taken into custody at the Jefferson County Jail on an alleged parole violation and several other criminal charges.

9. When I was booked at the jail, I was not even asked about my prescriptions. I had to inform the staff that I had a prescription for methadone. They told me I would not be able to obtain it, because the jail does not provide methadone. By contrast, the jail has allowed me to take other medications that I've been prescribed by Credo, including my mental health medications.

10. Without access to methadone, I immediately started experiencing withdrawal. I was in enormous pain and discomfort. I was constantly nauseous and vomited frequently. My stomach was very upset, and I always had to defecate. I lost my appetite and could not keep food down. I could not sit still and was extremely restless.

11. Within a couple of days of my arrest, I spoke with a nurse in the medical unit about my need for methadone. She said the jail did not provide methadone without providing further explanation. She informed me that someone at the jail had access to methadone, but only because he had a good attorney. She informed me that there would be no point in my filing a grievance because I would not be able to get access to methadone.

12. I regularly input medical requests for my prescribed methadone into the jail's kiosk system. We have to use the kiosks to make requests and communicate with the medical staff about health issues. To this day, I still have not gotten a single response back to my requests.

13. In early February, I tried to file a grievance about access to methadone. To file a grievance, you need to request a grievance form from the officers. However, you can only file a

grievance once you have received the form. I asked my pod officer for a grievance form and informed him that it concerned access to methadone. He told me that he would get back to me, but he never did. I have followed up with other officers, including Officer Piper, at least three times about my request to file a grievance and they always say that they will look into it. Yet, I still have not been given a grievance form or allowed to file a grievance.

14. I asked again to file a grievance during the week of February 21<sup>st</sup>. But Officer Nutting told me: “There’s no point in filing a grievance because the Sheriff said you would have to sue her to get methadone.”

15. This is not the only time that officers have interfered with my rights. I recently learned that the jail opened and photocopied my confidential legal mail without my consent. I also believe that the jail withheld my legal mail from me for weeks as I know that my lawyer overnighted the mail on February 2, 2022, and I did not receive it until around February 24, 2022. Usually, mail is not opened, and it is provided to us while we are in our cells. On this occasion, however, I only found out about my mail because I requested to make a legal call. I was brought to Officer Patterson’s office for the call. At that point, he gave me my mail. He did not provide any explanation or context for why my mail had not been brought to me. Once I returned to my cell, I realized that this was my confidential legal mail and that it had been opened without my permission. I saw that it had been photocopied because there were marks on the documents from the photocopier. I also noticed that the stamped return envelope that was supposed to be enclosed was missing.

16. Even though I have been at the Jefferson County Jail for over a month, I am still suffering from withdrawal. My symptoms are intolerable. I have terrible anxiety and cannot sit

still whatsoever. I am struggling to sleep and eat. My drug cravings are nonstop, and I feel powerless against them.

17. This is not the first time I've been deprived of my prescribed methadone at the Jefferson County Jail. The same thing happened to me when I was held at the jail in December 2019.

18. At the time I was taken into the jail's custody in December 2019, I had been consistently receiving my methadone treatment at Credo for three years. But even though I requested access to my methadone treatment, as soon as I was booked in the jail, the jail staff refused to provide me with my medication. When I inquired why, they informed me that the jail just did not provide methadone. I spoke to everyone I could about my need for methadone from the booking officers to the nurses to the pod officers. Yet, I was still deprived of my medication during the time I spent in jail.

19. Because I was suddenly taken off my methadone, I had an excruciating experience of withdrawal—just like the withdrawal I am experiencing now. I was constantly shaking, screaming, and vomiting. I had physical convulsions and was sweating all the time. I could not eat or sleep. I was in an incredible amount of pain.

20. Both of my experiences at the Jefferson County Jail have been extremely painful because the jail refused to provide me with my prescribed treatment for OUD. I need methadone to be able to resist these drug cravings. Methadone is the only thing that has helped me overcome my addiction. In the time that I have been consistently receiving methadone maintenance treatment, I have never used drugs. It is critical that I have access to methadone. My mental health relies on it; I am terrified that I will relapse, and potentially, overdose without it. I am

committed to reuniting with my family and being a strong, supportive, and stable mother to my children. However, I cannot fight for my family without methadone.

21. I understand that this is a class action lawsuit and have spoken with my attorney about what it means to be a class representative. I am willing to serve as a class representative for all non-pregnant people who are or will be detained at the Jefferson County Jail and have or will have prescriptions for agonist medication for OUD at the time they are taken into the jail's custody. I understand that this lawsuit is not only for my benefit, but for the benefit of other class members as well.

22. Staff of the New York Civil Liberties Union ("NYCLU") have read this declaration to me verbatim. I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct, and I have authorized the NYCLU to place my signature on the declaration.

Executed on: February 28, 2022  
Watertown, NY

/s/ [REDACTED]