

## **Francisco Martinez Testimony on Solitary Confinement – LA S.B. 1143**

My name is Francisco Martinez. I am a member of the Youth Justice Coalition. I am a youth who experienced solitary confinement as well as witnessed other youth experience it. We are honored to have worked on this motion, as well as to be co-sponsors of Senate Bill 1143. Please vote yes today.

I was only 17, when I experienced solitary confinement in LA County juvenile hall. At that age, experiencing solitary confinement was horrible - like an animal in a cage. The conditions were a small concrete dirty room. The walls were covered in dirt and dried up spit, smeared food, tagging on the walls on the bars of the bed, covering the windows. The mattress was so ripped up it felt as if I was laying on concrete or steel bars. We were kept in our boxers with a tee shirt and socks, and a thin blanket.

The cold from the air conditioning blowing 24-7 was worse for me, because I have asthma. I had shortness of breath when I woke up until I went to sleep. When I had an asthma attack I waited from morning until night to go to the medical unit. I was shaking and never able to get a good night's sleep.

Being in your room for so many hours without anything to read, nothing to write with, nothing to occupy your mind, you can't even escape to a fantasy world – even that would help people a lot. But not having that is traumatizing.

I would have to pound on the door when I needed to use the bathroom. Sometimes, the staff ignores you. And it's not uncommon for people to pee into a sheet or into the corner of their room.

The reason they had me in solitary confinement was because they didn't have options for how to deal with people. Instead of having me do positive things they had me in my room with my own thoughts feeling hopeless, helpless and scared. Feeling that was traumatizing to me.

I was getting high before I was locked up, and I also went into juvenile hall high. I went through withdrawals by myself and that made solitary even harder. They think being away from drugs is enough, but it doesn't fix itself. You need help to get through that feeling of wanting to get high.

Being let out from your room, even for a short while, was like having a huge weight lifted from my shoulders. My life could have been way different if they had done something different. Like having drug and alcohol classes, communication classes how to express your self to family and friends. Instead, with me being antisocial with people made me being alone for so long it's hard to know how to interact, you don't know how to start a conversation. You feel that it's not normal, or not rights to be with other people.

What they should they do instead of solitary confinement is more programming, more positive things to do besides locking people down for days. I am a youth that experience first hand what solitary confinement does to you. I don't wish this on anybody.