My name is Angie Halseth. I am a caseworker at Lino Lakes correctional facility.

As caseworkers, we help people navigate their way through their incarceration time, all the while preparing them for their transition back into the community. We act as their liaison to their families, the communities, the courts and social agencies. We assist them in reaching their goals such as treatment completion, identification documents, reunification with family and more.

That is the list of things we do when it is not a pandemic. During this pandemic, you can add to that list helping with laundry and food service. Some facilities gave us duty belts and updated self-defense training so we could act in officer positions. Some of us had to act as bailiffs during court hearings. Personally, I had to do temperature checks of all of the incarcerated people in the quarantine units. I also assisted in the mass testing of our population during outbreaks.

But like so many, extra work this year is just the start of the hardships. We were slow to receive personal protective equipment and items like plastic barriers were never an option for us. We sometimes had to meet with clients we knew were COVID positive but had very little to protect ourselves.

We’ve all worried that our jobs will make us or our family sick. I’ve had several DOC colleagues become ill from COVID-19 outbreaks at their facilities, including one who gave Covid to her pregnant wife and elderly in-laws. We have members who are currently suffering the long-term effects of COVID-19 and I don’t know if they will ever recover.

And for us, it isn’t over yet. Just this week, we had another positive test in my facility. The Delta variant has us all on edge as we know how quickly things spread in a closed facility with 1,500 people all living together.

Working in Corrections is a challenging and exhausting career. But there is great satisfaction in knowing that we’re working to help our communities and keep them safe.

We are proud to be frontline workers. I am glad that this taskforce is getting to work today to find a way to recognize the sacrifices that so many made. As you proceed, I know you will discover the need is great and we hope you are ready to ask for more resources for frontline workers. We are a state that is lucky to have more resources available, and I am asking the State to spend those resources helping frontline workers try to be whole again.

Thank you for your time.