

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND**

ANTHONY BLUE	*	Civil Action Nos. RDB-16-945 (Blue)
JOHNNY JAMES		RDB-16-946 (James)
STEVEN BROWN	*	RDB-16-947 (Brown)
ROBERT WILSON		RDB-16-948 (Wilson)
MAYNARD SNEAD	*	RDB-16-949 (Snead)
RUSSELL HOPKINS		RDB-16-950 (Hopkins)
TYRELL POLLEY	*	RDB-16-951 (Polley)
GREGORY HAMMOND		RDB-16-952 (Hammond)
SEDRIC HOLLEY	*	RDB-16-953 (Holley)
WILBERT M. DELANO		RDB-16-954 (Delano)

Plaintiffs

v

WARDEN

Defendant

ORDER

The above entitled civil actions were opened upon receipt of ten identical pleadings drafted by an unknown prisoner seeking appointment of counsel for each of the noted Plaintiffs who are visually impaired and incarcerated at Roxbury Correctional Institution (“RCI”). Each of the Plaintiffs generally claim that there are no acceptable services in place at RCI to assist them in pursuing administrative remedies or gaining access to the courts for purposes of challenging the validity of their convictions or filing civil rights claims regarding their conditions of confinement. Each also asserts that they are forced to rely on the assistance of other inmates who are not trained in law and who are often harassed by correctional officers for providing that assistance. They further aver that reliance upon other inmates to read their incoming mail to them subjects them to potential harm if the mail contains information that would make them a target for prison violence or contains the address of their family members. ECF 1. Because the

claims presented in each case are identical, the cases shall be consolidated for all further purposes.

The bare bones allegations presented potentially raise both a constitutional claim and a claim under the Americans with Disabilities Act; however, the information provided is simply insufficient to discern which of the Plaintiffs have a viable claim, nor can it be discerned who the proper Defendants are for such claims. This Court is empowered with the discretion to appoint counsel in instances where exceptional circumstances are presented by an indigent claimant. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(1), *see also Cook v. Bounds*, 518 F.2d 779, 780 (4th Cir. 1975); *Branch v. Cole*, 686 F.2d 264, 266 (5th Cir. 1982). Exceptional circumstances exist in the instant case by virtue of the asserted visual impairment of the plaintiffs, making the ordinary course of directing the plaintiffs to correct the deficiencies in the pleadings filed a futility without the assistance of learned counsel.

Prisoner's Rights Information System of Maryland ("PRISM") and its chief counsel, Stephen Meehan, are currently contracted with the State of Maryland to provide persons confined to Maryland's prisons with representation or advice in civil rights matters and Inmate Grievance Office cases. As such, Mr. Meehan and his colleagues are uniquely qualified to be appointed as counsel in these cases for the limited purpose of investigating potential claims and preparing and filing Amended Complaints as well as accompanying Motions to Proceed in Forma Pauperis, where appropriate, on behalf of each Plaintiff. The Court recognizes the potential burden such a task may place on counsel and, thus, will permit ample time for the process. Counsel is reminded that should the need arise for additional time beyond that which is herein granted, he may simply request an extension of time.

Accordingly, it is this 4th day of April, 2016, by the United States District Court for the District of Maryland, hereby ORDERED that:

1. The Clerk SHALL CONSOLIDATE Civil Actions RDB-16-946; RDB-16-947; RDB-16-948; RDB-16-949; RDB-16-950; RDB-16-951; RDB-16-952; RDB-16-953; and RDB-16-954 with Civil Action RDB-16-945;
2. The Clerk SHALL DOCKET the pleadings filed in Civil Actions RDB-16-946; RDB-16-947; RDB-16-948; RDB-16-949; RDB-16-950; RDB-16-951; RDB-16-952; RDB-16-953; and RDB-16-954 in Civil Action RDB-16-945, which shall be the lead case;
3. Plaintiffs' Motions for Appointment of Counsel ARE GRANTED for the limited purpose of filing an AMENDED COMPLAINT on their behalf together with a Motion to Proceed in Forma Pauperis where appropriate;
4. Stephen Meehan of PRISM IS APPOINTED to represent the Plaintiff in each of the cases filed for the LIMITED PURPOSE as stated herein;
5. Counsel IS GRANTED 60 days from the date of this Order to file the required pleadings; and
6. The Clerk SHALL PROVIDE a copy of this Order to EACH Plaintiff and SHALL PROVIDE a copy of this Order along with a list of the ten Plaintiffs names, identification numbers, and addresses to appointed counsel.

/s/
RICHARD D. BENNETT
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE