

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 11, 2020

Michael Carvajal
Director, Bureau of Prisons
320 1st St NW
Washington, DC 20534

Donald Washington
Director, U.S. Marshals Service
1215 S Clark St
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Directors Carvajal and Washington:

We write to express concern and disappointment that the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) are transferring inmates to newly-designated federal prison quarantine sites in our states and districts—some from facilities facing COVID-19 outbreaks—without first testing these inmates for COVID-19. We urge the Department of Justice and BOP to test all inmates and confirm that they are negative for COVID-19 before transferring them to BOP quarantine locations across the country.

On April 27th, BOP informed our offices that federal prisons in our communities have been selected to be used as quarantine locations for newly-admitted inmates that BOP receives from the USMS. This includes the following locations:

USP Thomson, Illinois
FCC Victorville, California
FCC Terre Haute, Indiana
FCC Yazoo City, Mississippi
FCI Ray Brook, New York
FCI El Reno, Oklahoma

FTC Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
FDC Houston, Texas
FCI Gilmer, West Virginia
FCC Hazelton, West Virginia
FCI Fairton, New Jersey

We are troubled that testing is not among the preventive steps that the USMS and BOP are taking before transferring inmates to these facilities. As you know, screening without testing will not prevent the transfer of asymptomatic inmates with COVID-19, who can transmit the virus to BOP staff, even if they are completely isolated from other inmates. These inadequate screenings are particularly concerning in light of recent data that has illustrated the extent of asymptomatic infections in state correctional settings. Last week, [*Reuters*](#) reported that in the Arkansas, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia state prison systems, 96 percent of more than 3,200 inmates who tested positive for COVID-19 were asymptomatic.

Unfortunately, we have already seen examples of the USMS and BOP transferring inmates from facilities with a COVID-19 outbreak to federal prisons that have no known cases of COVID-19. Last month, BOP transferred at least 20 inmates from Metropolitan Correction Center (MCC)

Chicago, where there is a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak, to the United States Penitentiary (USP) Thomson, in Thomson, Illinois, where there are currently no known cases of COVID-19.

These transfers without testing unnecessarily put inmates and both BOP and USMS staff at risk of exposure to COVID-19. They also threaten local communities that surround the designated quarantine sites. We are particularly troubled by the potential strain that an outbreak could place on limited local health resources in the rural communities where some of these quarantine facilities are based.

In light of these concerns, it is imperative that the Department of Justice and BOP test all inmates and confirm that they are negative for COVID-19 before transferring them to these BOP quarantine locations. We also urge you to expand access to testing for BOP staff, who are on the frontlines of addressing this crisis within our federal prison system.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to a prompt response.

Sincerely,

/s/ Cheri Bustos

Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

/s/ Dick Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ David B. McKinley

David B. McKinley
Member of Congress

/s/ Charles E. Grassley

Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

/s/ Bennie G. Thompson

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Paul Cook

Col. Paul Cook Ret.
Member of Congress

/s/ Joni K. Ernst

Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

/s/ Kendra S. Horn

Kendra S. Horn
Member of Congress

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Larry Bucshon

Larry Bucshon, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Braun

Mike Braun
United States Senator

/s/ Al Green

Al Green
Member of Congress

/s/ Kamala D. Harris

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/ Frank D. Lucas

Frank D. Lucas
Member of Congress

/s/ Todd Young

Todd Young
United States Senator

/s/ Dave Loebsack

Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress

/s/ Charles E. Schumer

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

/s/ Elise M. Stefanik

Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress

/s/ James M. Inhofe

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

/s/ Mark Takano

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/ Jeff Van Drew

Jeff Van Drew
Member of Congress

/s/ James Lankford

James Lankford
United States Senator

/s/ J. Louis Correa

J. Louis Correa
Member of Congress

/s/ Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

/s/ Bill Foster

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/ Cory A. Booker

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Pete Aguilar

Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress

/s/ Joe Manchin III

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

/s/ Jamie Raskin

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress