

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 18, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Eric S. Dreiband
Assistant Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr and Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband:

We write today regarding the U.S. Department of Justice's investigation into disturbing reports of systemic violations of the federal rights of individuals with disabilities at the Glenwood Resource Center (GRC) and the Woodward Resource Center (WRC) in Iowa.

This week, Iowa State inspectors reported that the Glenwood Resource Center (GRC) delayed calling an ambulance for more than two hours after a resident of the facility began demonstrating signs of physical distress.¹ This resident subsequently died of a heart attack in June 2020. As you know, these recent allegations are preceded by several reports of the deaths of severely disabled residents at this same institution and other allegations of abuse.² This is deeply concerning to us.

It is our understanding that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is currently proceeding with an investigation into allegations of federal violations at GRC and the Woodward Resource Center (WRC). As you continue this investigation, we request that you include this new case in your examination and that you provide us with a timeline of when you anticipate the Department's investigation will be completed.

Additionally, we want to underscore the importance of the Civil Rights Division at DOJ, which was established in 1957 to uphold the civil and constitutional rights of all Americans, and particularly relevant here, some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Given this duty, it is of upmost importance that DOJ's investigation be thorough, transparent, and timely.

¹ Tony Leys, "After Another Iowan with Disabilities Dies, State's Glenwood Institution Faces New Allegation of Poor Care," DES MOINES REGISTER (Dec. 15, 2020), available at <https://www.desmoinesregister.com>.

² Chris Gothner, "27-page Report Details Staff Shortage, Toxic Environment at Glenwood Resource Center," KCCI DES MOINES (July 21, 2020), available at <https://www.kcci.com/article/27-page-report-details-staff-shortage-toxic-environment-at-glenwood-resource-center/33383172#>.

We seek to make informed policy recommendations about any necessary reforms to ensure the safety of Iowans residing at GRC and WRC, and that our nation's oversight systems over all facilities receiving taxpayer dollars through the Medicaid/Medicare program, are indeed functioning properly. We therefore request that DOJ provide responses to the following questions:

1. Please provide:
 - a. A timeline of the Department's investigation into both GRC and WRC, and a status update, given the most recent allegations, which surfaced this month.
 - b. An explanation of the Department's investigation, with respect to whether the DOJ is actively collecting information from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), given its respective oversight functions.
2. Given the Department's ongoing investigation into both GRC and WRC, which we understand was initiated under the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act and Title H of the Americans with Disabilities Act, has the DOJ consulted with HHS and/or CMS regarding the operations and status of either Center? If so, please explain. If not, please explain why not.

In closing, thank you for your attention to this very important matter. Responses to all questions should be provided no later than December 31, 2020. We look forward to your response. If you have any questions, please contact Rachael Soloway of Senator Grassley's staff at (202) 224-3744 and Anna Breen of Senator Ernst's staff at (202) 224-3254.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator