

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 29, 2020

Mr. Michael Carvajal
Director
Federal Bureau of Prisons
320 First Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20534

Dear Mr. Carvajal:

We write to request that you work with state and local officials to combat the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) within the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). While challenges continue, we commend the law enforcement personnel, correctional officers, and staff that have worked to respond to the outbreak inside the Lompoc Federal Correctional Complex (FCC). However, it is critical that this become a whole-of-government approach, as this virus continues to spread. We ask that you work collaboratively with state and local governments to ensure benchmarks are met to effectively contain this public health crisis and to prevent the continued spread of the disease within the staff population, inmate populations, and neighboring communities.

We are extremely concerned with how quickly the virus propagated within the prison population. We first wrote to you on April 15, 2020, urging the BOP to take every action possible to curb the spread of COVID-19 within the Lompoc prison, including establishing a mobile hospital to handle an outbreak at the prison facility. At the time, there were only 63 total confirmed cases at the Lompoc United States Penitentiary (USP)—which included 17 staff members and 46 inmates. On April 21, 2020, we followed up to ask BOP to proceed with more urgency to procure the necessary staff or medical equipment. When we sent our second request, data from Santa Barbara County showed that 81 inmates and 29 staff members had tested positive for COVID-19. We also learned from local reporting that an inmate within the USP had died and another had been released and died within a week due to COVID-19. We appreciate your response dated May 7, 2020. While some progress has been made, more action is required.

Today, nearly four weeks after our initial request, there are over 1,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the Lompoc prison. Three inmates have died—with the most recent death announced on May 26, 2020. This heightens our concerns on how this crisis has been managed and the BOP's response moving forward to effectively control this public health emergency at the facility.

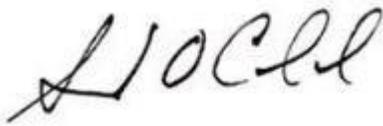
We are troubled the BOP did not take swift action to test the inmate population, isolate those who tested positive for the virus, and effectively curb the spread of COVID-19.

We are also disturbed that it took the BOP over four weeks to arrange for alternative housing options for its correctional officers and law enforcement personnel and has not moved forward with measures to test all inmates within the USP at Lompoc for COVID-19. As we know from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic individuals are equally capable of transmitting this disease to others. That is why we think it is critical that BOP provide the option for alternative housing for the men and women who work at the prison in order to protect their loved ones and the community from contracting the disease. It is our understanding that the BOP has partnered with the state of California to include correctional officers in the state's hotels for workers program. However, the BOP should be taking a more proactive role in supporting its employees.

Based on best practices and the information we have so far about this disease, we think it is critical to test all inmates at the USP for COVID-19. If no action is taken, we risk losing what remains of the last window to contain the further spread of COVID-19 at Lompoc. As we mentioned on our letter dated April 21, 2020, we would also urge the BOP to develop guidance to ensure inmates who test positive for COVID-19 are given robust access to quality health care.

Again, we want to stress the importance of taking swift action in implementing these and other measures. Please let us know if you have any questions—as we stand ready to provide any assistance.

Sincerely,



SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress



KAMALA D. HARRIS
United States Senator



DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator