



National Coalition of Public Safety Officers

"The Toughest Beat in Virginia"

5809 Lakeside Avenue • Richmond, Virginia 23228 • (877) 223-2303

April 28, 2020

The Honorable Governor Ralph Northam
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam,

On behalf of the National Coalition of Public Safety Officers (NCPSO), I am writing you today representing the officers and staff of the Department of Corrections and Department of Juvenile Justice asking you to implement wide-spread testing for Covid-19 for all officers, staff, offenders and residents. We appreciate the plan that has been put into place at the Deerfield Correctional Facility, but unfortunately this is not enough.

As you know, the infection rates within these departments continue to rise with severe outbreaks at Virginia Correctional Center for Women, Haynesville, Sussex II, Camp 13, Harrisonburg Work Camp, and Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Facility. These facilities are a microcosm of our community; yet the standard CDC guidelines are not able to be applied at these locations, especially for the staff and officers, as they are in close proximity to their colleagues, offenders, and residents on a daily basis.

On Friday, April 17th, DJJ Chief Physician Dr. Christopher Moon reported that out of the 26 Bon Air Residents that tested positive, 21 of them had no outward symptoms. This is extremely concerning and is unfortunately consistent with studies that show that many COVID-19 victims are asymptomatic. The current procedures that have been developed within the DOC and DJJ are to contain those offenders and residents who have tested positive and for staff to be denied entry if they report symptoms or have a temperature over 100.4 degrees. While important, these procedures do not take into account those who are asymptomatic.

In accordance with new CDC guidelines and your statements about reopening Virginia, the plan is to proceed in phases based on data. It is our opinion that we don't have real data for these facilities that are in a unique position until we are able to truly find out the level of infection and then be able to take the necessary steps to isolate. We understand that the point prevalence testing at Haynesville and Harrisonburg Men's CCAP can give us a snapshot, but unless we test everyone, we really do not have the data we need to fully protect these and other facilities. We still have movement within these facilities and that

includes those offenders who are involved in producing face masks. What we are doing now is clearly not working.

We certainly understand the difficulty in obtaining testing kits and other supplies and know that you have been working hard to solve this very difficult problem. On the conference call with the Virginia AFL-CIO Executive Council we asked about testing and were told there were no plans for widespread testing at that time. We are asking that these facilities, due to their unique situations, be prioritized and a plan be developed to complete widespread testing for all. We feel that this should start with the facilities that are currently hotspots.

We know that you want nothing but the best for all Virginians in this very difficult time and we are hoping you consider and act on this request as expeditiously as possible. Thank you for your help on this matter and the work that you are doing every day, we look forward to working with you on this matter.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Baylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

Don Baylor

President, National Coalition of Public Safety Officers, CWA 2201 (CWA 2201- NCPSO)