

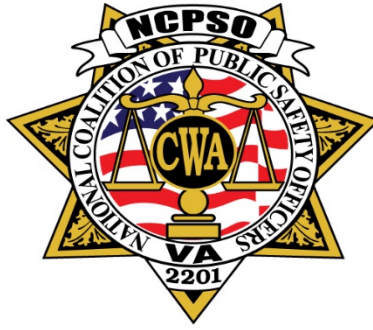
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Corrections Officers' Union Calls on Governor to Immediately Start Wide-Spread Testing**

**Richmond, VA** - Today the National Coalition of Public Safety Officers (NCPSO) sent a letter to Governor Northam asking again for COVID-19 testing for all officers, staff, offenders and residents at the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

As of Monday, April 27, there were 364 offenders in the Facilities and 66 staff who tested positive for COVID-19 at the Department of Corrections; 30 of the 66 staff members who tested positive work at Virginia Correctional Center for Women (VCCW). There are an additional 7 offenders in hospitals and two offenders are deceased. These cases are mainly centered around 8 facilities across the Commonwealth. Within the Department of Juvenile Justice there are currently 3 residents in medical isolation and 24 who have been released from isolation. There are 8 staff currently not at work who have tested positive and 2 have returned to work at the Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center (Bon Air JCC). 21 of the residents at Bon Air JCC "exhibited no outward symptoms," [according to Department of Juvenile Justice Chief Physician Dr. Christopher Moon, reported on April 17, 2020 by WWBT.](#)

On Friday, April 17, Governor Northam spoke on guidelines for reopening our community based on a phased approach using science and data consistent with the CDC guidelines.

"These facilities are a microcosm of the community at large with one main difference, social distancing is not an option for officers and staff. These cases continue to rise and we must start with the facilities that have been most affected, test everyone just like Deerfield, and then move to every other location in order for us to have the data to know what must be done," said Baylor. "I get calls every day from officers who are scared, afraid to speak out but still want to stand their post. They just want to do it knowing everything has been done to protect them and everyone else in these facilities."

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, [the DOC announced that they would test offenders and staff at the Deerfield Correctional Facility and perform point prevalence testing at Harrisonburg CCAP and Haynesville Correctional Facility.](#) According to Donald Baylor, Virginia Director for NCPSO, "We must test everyone in these facilities and those who regularly enter. It is concerning that many testing positive show no symptoms, and how else will we get a handle on the facilities where this deadly virus has taken hold unless we know who has it. We asked last week about widespread testing and were told at that time there was not a plan, well now is the time. DOC's recent announcement of testing at Deerfield and point prevalence testing at Haynesville and Harrisonburg is a start but does not go far enough to protect everyone in all facilities."

*The National Coalition of Public Safety Officers is a national organization, affiliated with the Communications Workers of America, who represent officers and staff at both the Virginia DOC and DJJ and at other organizations across the country.*

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