

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 15, 2021

The Honorable Michael E. Horowitz  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Inspector General Horowitz,

We write today to thank you for your oversight of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to date during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to urge you to expand your ongoing investigations to include Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) Fort Dix. Earlier this week FCI Fort Dix once again had the most severe COVID-19 outbreak of all federal prisons, and we are alarmed that BOP has repeatedly failed to contain outbreaks at the facility. Additional oversight is urgently required to protect the safety of incarcerated individuals and staff at FCI Fort Dix.

More than 300 incarcerated individuals and 29 staff members at FCI Fort Dix have active COVID-19 cases.<sup>1</sup> This is not the first severe outbreak at the facility, as FCI Fort Dix has faced several waves of COVID-19 infections in recent months. BOP reports that nearly 1,100 incarcerated individuals and 45 staff members at FCI Fort Dix have recovered from the virus, which means that in total more than half of the incarcerated population at the facility has been infected with COVID-19 to date.<sup>2</sup> Even still, these figures may not capture the full picture of COVID-19 infections due to the lack of consistent and universal testing at FCI Fort Dix. In short, BOP has had ten months to learn how to protect the incarcerated individuals and staff at FCI Fort Dix during this pandemic, and has failed.

In response to the outbreaks at FCI Fort Dix, as Members of New Jersey's congressional delegation we have repeatedly called on BOP to improve its strategies for testing and infection control at the facility, including via letters sent to the BOP Director on November 9, 2020 and December 8, 2020. In response, BOP has continued to insist that the situation at FCI Fort Dix is under control. In his response letter dated December 16, 2020, BOP Director Michael Carvajal noted that "the efficacy of the Bureau's mitigation strategies can be seen in the very low number of hospitalized inmates." However, the recent surge in COVID-19 cases at the facility indicates that the BOP's mitigation strategies at FCI Fort Dix are not working. We have also heard reports from constituents with incarcerated family members that BOP is failing to provide sufficient medical care, and that living conditions inside the facility have steeply deteriorated.

In light of the concerns described above, we urge you to immediately investigate the COVID-19 response at FCI Fort Dix, including infection control and testing procedures, access to medical care, impacts on living conditions, and transfers to home confinement. We are gravely

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.bop.gov/coronavirus/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bop.gov/locations/institutions/ftd/>

concerned that without additional oversight, BOP will continue to endanger the lives of the incarcerated individuals and staff at FCI Fort Dix. Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter, and we look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Andy Kim  
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress