

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

November 9, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Carvajal,

We write today to express grave concerns regarding the Bureau of Prison's (BOP's) inadequate protocols for COVID-19 testing and inmate transfers. Specifically, we are concerned that BOP recently transferred COVID-19 positive inmates to FCI Fort Dix, which is now facing a second, and potentially severe, COVID-19 outbreak. We strongly urge you to extend the recently enacted moratorium on inmate transfers to FCI Fort Dix to also cover FCI Fairton, and that you continue the moratorium until BOP eradicates the new COVID-19 outbreak at the facility and formulates an effective and accurate testing strategy to protect both staff and inmates from future outbreaks.

Prior to October, BOP had not reported any recent COVID-19 cases among inmates or staff at FCI Fort Dix. However, in early October, BOP reportedly alerted staff at FCI Fort Dix that their facility would begin receiving inmate transfers from FCI Elkton in Ohio. FCI Elkton has been severely affected by COVID-19, with nearly 1,000 known cases among inmates and staff to date.<sup>1</sup> Despite the known risks of inmate transfers during a pandemic,<sup>2</sup> BOP transferred more than 150 inmates from FCI Elkton to FCI Fort Dix in recent weeks. On October 28, 2020, BOP confirmed in an email to congressional staff that 54 inmates tested positive for COVID-19 in the 5812 unit of FCI Fort Dix, which is reportedly the unit into which the FCI Elkton inmates were transferred. On October 29, 2020, BOP confirmed that five FCI Elkton inmates who were transferred to FCI Fort Dix on the evening of October 28, 2020 had rapid-tested positive for COVID-19 upon arrival and were placed in isolation.

While the situation is rapidly evolving, it is clear that BOP does not have an effective plan to ensure COVID-19 positive inmates are not transferred between facilities. The outbreak is now spreading within FCI Fort Dix, and as of November 9, 2020, there are at least 228 active COVID-19 cases among inmates and ten active COVID-19 cases among staff members.<sup>3</sup> The FCI Fort Dix employees responsible for transporting the FCI Fort Elkton transfers may have been exposed to COVID-19 in transit. All FCI Fort Dix inmates, staff, and the surrounding communities are now at increased risk for contracting COVID-19, with potentially deadly consequences.

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

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.bop.gov/coronavirus/covid19\\_status.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/coronavirus/covid19_status.jsp)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bop.gov/coronavirus/>

In light of the rapidly escalating crisis at FCI Fort Dix, we urge you to immediately test all FCI Fort Dix inmates and staff for COVID-19. We appreciate that BOP has instituted a temporary moratorium on transfers into FCI Fort Dix until November 23, 2020. However, rather than using an arbitrary date, we urge BOP to halt all transfers to FCI Fort Dix until BOP institutes an effective and accurate testing strategy for inmates and staff and there are no active cases at the facility. Given that BOP does not currently have an effective strategy for safe inmate transfers, we also request that BOP extend this moratorium to New Jersey's other facility, FCI Fairton.

In regards to an effective COVID-19 testing strategy, we strongly urge you to institute a plan to test all FCI Fort Dix inmates and staff on at least a biweekly basis. FCI Fort Dix's employees are frontline federal workers, and it is unacceptable that BOP is not providing them with regular COVID-19 testing. By failing to test FCI Fort Dix's employees, BOP is needlessly endangering not only these employees but their families, all inmates, and the entire surrounding community.

Additionally, we request that BOP provide detailed answers to the following questions no later than Friday, November 20, 2020:

- 1) Will BOP commit to halting all inmate transfers to FCI Fort Dix and FCI Fairton until the current COVID-19 outbreak at the facility has ended and there are no active cases among inmates or staff?
- 2) During the FCI Fort Dix transfer moratorium, will BOP also commit to halting any inmate transfers to FCI Fairton?
- 3) What is BOP's plan for addressing the current COVID-19 outbreak at Fort Dix, including information on testing, safety protocols, notifications to staff and inmates, as well as any future outbreaks at FCI Fort Dix and ensuring the safety of both inmates and staff?
- 4) In an email to congressional staff, BOP indicated that inmates who had tested positive for COVID-19 in the previous 90 days and were asymptomatic were not retested before being transferred from FCI Elkton to FCI Fort Dix. Can you verify that all FCI Elkton inmates who previously tested positive for COVID-19 received two negative COVID-19 test results before their transfer to FCI Fort Dix? Please describe, in detail, the process for testing the FCI Elkton inmates prior to their transfer to FCI Fort Dix.
- 5) What is BOP's overall, long-term COVID-19 testing strategy for FCI Fort Dix? How will BOP update the COVID-19 testing strategy at FCI Fort Dix in light of the recent outbreak?
- 6) Will BOP begin providing COVID-19 testing to FCI Fort Dix employees? If so, how often will such testing occur?
- 7) How has FCI Fort Dix spent the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136) funding that has been allocated the facility? Please provide a detailed breakdown.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this urgent matter.

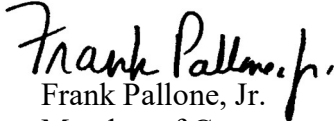
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator





Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator


  
Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress


  
Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress


  
Albio Sires  
Member of Congress

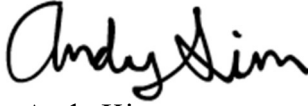
  
Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
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