

April 15, 2020

William Zerillo
Facility Administrator
GEO Secure Services
Queens Detention Facility
182-22 150 Avenue
Jamaica, NY 11413

Dear Warden Zerillo,

I am writing to express serious concerns about the health and safety of detainees and staff at GEO's Queens Detention Facility. Reports that I have seen in addition to your own recent accounting of the number of COVID 19 cases at the facility leave me with numerous questions about the risk of the virus spreading uncontrollably and the need for immediate action. Your April 14, 2020 update describing 25 detainees testing positive and 10 staff testing positive is alarming given the size of the prison population, and limitations in providing space or to quarantine inmates. I have several urgent and time sensitive questions:

- I understand that GEO tested a number of symptomatic inmates last week, resulting in 25 total positive tests at the facility. How many additional inmates are complaining of symptoms and have not yet been tested?
- What efforts are being made to separate symptomatic inmates? It is my understanding that symptomatic and positive inmates are currently housed in open dormitories with non-symptomatic inmates. Given that there are a number of different dormitories, can the facility move the symptomatic and positive inmates into one or two dorms, so that they are not in close proximity to the other inmates?
- What methods are you using to screen symptomatic inmates? Is it limited to temperature readings? How are you screening for those people who may have contracted the virus but are not exhibiting elevated temperatures, which according to the CDC is quite common?
- How many doctors does the facility have and what hours are they at the facility each day or week? Does the facility have a medical unit adequate for treatment of inmates with COVID 19 symptoms?
- How many inmates have gone to the hospital since 3/13/20?
- Are the GEO staff who work on the housing units required to wear masks and gloves at all times?
- Have all GEO staff been provided with N-95 masks?
- 10 staff members at the facility have tested positive. Were other staff members who were exposed to the positive staff members quarantined for a 14 day period before returning to work? Were inmates who were exposed to those positive staff members quarantined or otherwise separated for a 14 day period?

In this unprecedented time, it is critical that we do all that we can to care for the most vulnerable among us. Detainees and the staff at the Queens Detention Facility deserve every effort to protect them from the many risks of COVID 19. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gregory W. Meeks". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "G" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Cc: Donald Washington
Director U.S. Marshals Service