

# CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA  
95814

June 25, 2020

Ralph Diaz, Secretary  
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
via email

Re: COVID-19 outbreak at California Correctional Center and High Desert State Prison

Dear Secretary Diaz,

We write to express our grave concerns about the inadequate communication, planning and protocols that have led to an explosive outbreak of COVID-19 among inmates at the California Correctional Center and threaten the health of both prison staff and the broader community of Susanville. Lassen County has previously requested assistance from CDCR to assist during this pandemic and was told CDCR staff would not be available due to bargaining unit contract restrictions. We hope this letter finds executive management with a renewed sense of cooperation.

While we are all dealing with an unprecedented situation, it is incumbent on the state to work openly and collaboratively with impacted local governments and health systems to protect lives and ensure adequate capacity to treat patients. That is especially the case in small and remote communities where prison staff make up a very large share of the local workforce, as in Lassen County.

It is our understanding that the outbreak at CCC began with a handful of inmates transferred from San Quentin State Prison, who had recent negative tests but were not quarantined upon transfer. As of today, it has since infected 63 inmates; however, there are still over 1,000 tests pending and the virus is fully expected to spread "like wildfire." We further understand, but have not been informed through any formal channels, that CDCR plans to transfer any COVID-19 patients from conservation camps to the California Correctional Center, with contracted local hospitals being responsible for any intensive or emergency care.

With this background in mind, we have some questions we hope you could promptly address:

- What is the Department's reasoning for this decision and what are its plans to avoid further infection among inmates during these transfers and avoid impacting small rural hospitals?
- Assuming severe cases would be transferred to out-of-county hospitals, what is CDCR's plan to bolster this rural county's bare-bones emergency medical services capacity so it does not fail under the weight of this medical surge?
- Since CDCR accounts for the majority of COVID-19 cases in Lassen County, why is the department still not participating in the local Incident Command Team meetings?
- With the drastic increase in the need for testing capacity, how will the department facilitate the required testing supplies for the inmate population and how will the department assist in the already limited testing capacity of the Lassen County Public Health Department?


We understand this is an extraordinary challenge for the Department, but we are very concerned that CDCR is making decisions that threaten serious potential impacts to neighboring communities without the kind of planning and consultation that sound emergency management demands.

Thank you for your prompt attention and response. If we can help you with further information, please don't hesitate to contact District Director Bruce Ross (Senator Dahle) at [Bruce.Ross@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Bruce.Ross@sen.ca.gov) or Senior Field Representative Alice Bennett (Assemblywoman Dahle) at [Alice.Bennett@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Alice.Bennett@asm.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



**BRIAN DAHLE**  
Senator, 1<sup>st</sup> District



**MEGAN DAHLE**  
Assemblywoman, 1<sup>st</sup> District