

ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

HON. APRIL N.M. BASKIN

CHAIR OF THE LEGISLATURE

2ND DISTRICT LEGISLATOR

Hon. Timothy B. Howard
Erie County Sheriff
10 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14202



November 10, 2020

☐ 792 E. Delavan Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14215
716/895-1849
FAX: 716/895-1910

☐ 92 Franklin St., 4th Fl.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716/858-8869
FAX: 716/858-8895

☐ *Legislative Assistant*
Pedro Gonzalez-Ortiz

E-Mail:
Pedro.Gonzalez-Ortiz@erie.gov

Re: 27 Prisoners Testing Positive for COVID-19 in the Erie County Correctional Facility

Dear Sheriff Howard:

I was informed this afternoon that 27 prisoners in the Erie County Correctional Facility have tested positive for COVID-19, apparently infected by a single guard at the facility. I also understand that an additional 12 prisoners were deemed to be in close contact to the affected guard. These total to 39 prisoners out of 372 inmates at the Correctional Facility, or more than 10%.

Since the outbreak began, we have been assured that the Sheriff's Office maintains proper COVID protocols for protecting inmates and staff alike from exposure to the Coronavirus. We have also been assured that no inmates (who are captive to the Holding Center and Correctional Facility) tested positive for COVID. Today's announcement of positive cases proves the COVID protection mechanisms set and previously submitted by your office to the County Legislature deserve reevaluation.

These prisoners have been remanded by a judge and are in the Sheriff's custody and are your responsibility and obligation to safely and humanely incarcerate.

I am requesting answers from you and an investigation into how this outbreak occurred, and what your office is doing to contain it, protect the other prisoners and staff, and assist the prisoners who have tested positive. Please reply and explain the procedures and protocols for protecting detainees (and staff) and what happens when a guard/employee or prisoner tests positive or is symptomatic. For instance, how are you isolating or quarantining prisoners, including the close contacts and COVID-positive prisoners? What medical care are they receiving? Have they and their family members been notified? What are the quarantine and cleaning procedures? Where are the affected prisoners being held now? What care are they receiving? Who is being tested? Has any consideration been made for moving positive non-violent prisoners to an alternative quarantine facility for fourteen days? Who can make such a decision? A judge? The Commission of Correction?

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,



April N.M. Baskin, Chair
Erie County Legislature

cc: Thomas Diina, Superintendent of Jail Management
John Greenan, Undersheriff
Michael Reardon, First Deputy Superintendent, Correctional Health
Website: <http://www2.erie.gov/baskin/> • E-Mail: April.McCants-Baskin@erie.gov