

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 25, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr  
Attorney General  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr:

I write to request your urgent intervention to immediately halt plans by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to send new out-of-state inmates from COVID-19 hotspot regions of the country to quarantine at two institutions in West Virginia: FCC Hazelton and FCI Gilmer. The move of new out-of-state inmates puts our already vulnerable population, and our correctional officers and their families in West Virginia, at a greater risk of exposure to COVID-19.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, West Virginia is home to the highest-risk population in the country for COVID-19, and West Virginians have buckled down and closely followed public health guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 here in the Mountain State. I am aware of the BOP's efforts to implement an aggressive action plan to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 throughout their facilities nationwide, but transporting new out-of-state inmates, even those who may be asymptomatic for COVID-19, from hotspot regions of the country to West Virginia significantly increases the risk of transmitting the virus across state lines. While I understand statutory obligations facing the BOP to accept newly admitted inmates from the United States Marshals Service, I believe it is imperative that Department of Justice (DOJ) and the BOP consider the potential health risks associated with moving new out-of-state inmates in to the BOP's facilities in West Virginia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead, I respectfully request you consider helping West Virginia during this challenging time by utilizing the excess capacity at FCC Hazelton and FCI Gilmer to support efforts already underway to relieve the overcrowding in our state jails and waive the cost of housing those state inmates for the duration of the pandemic. This act of compassion by DOJ and BOP would greatly benefit the people of West Virginia while we continue to fight this terrible virus. By working as a partner with the state to better utilize the excess capacity in these facilities we can join together on a solution to enhance physical distancing in our state jails and slow the spread of COVID-19 in West Virginia.

Again, I implore you to cease the movement of these new out-of-state inmates to West Virginia and work with the state to bolster ongoing efforts to protect the public, our correctional officers, and the current inmate population.

During this time of a global pandemic, we must take every precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19. That vigilance is especially necessary in our correctional system, where the brave men and women who operate these facilities work in close proximity with our prison populations and then go home to their families. I look forward to your response and remain committed to working with you and the leadership at BOP to keep the citizens of West Virginia, our correctional officers, and inmates safe as we fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

With warmest regards,



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U.S. Senator Joe Manchin III