

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 25, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Sessions III  
Attorney General  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

We are writing to express our deep concerns about the Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) staffing practices, particularly the over-reliance on augmentation and the failure to follow clear congressional directives to hire more full-time correctional officers.

We share your belief that the safety of staff, inmates, and the public is the highest priority for the BOP. Unfortunately, our states, West Virginia and Pennsylvania, have seen firsthand how dangerous continual understaffing can be to both BOP staff and the inmates they supervise. In February 2013, Correctional Officer Eric Williams was brutally murdered by an inmate at USP Canaan in Pennsylvania. Officer Williams was alone in a housing unit with over one hundred inmates when he was attacked. In April 2018, an inmate at FCC Hazelton in West Virginia was mortally wounded in a fight that erupted in one of the housing units and died shortly thereafter. Last month, another inmate was killed at the same West Virginia facility, marking the second homicide in that facility in just five months. This is unacceptable.

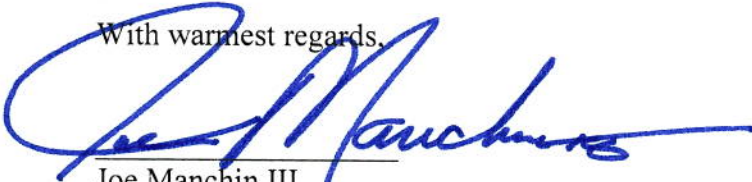
In 2016, with our support, Congress provided BOP with additional funds to support additional correctional officers for each housing unit at high security institutions. As such, all BOP high security institutions would have at least two correctional officers on duty in each housing unit for all three shifts. Since then, this funding has been included each fiscal year. Unfortunately, as we understand it, this policy is not being enforced as intended. We have heard reports, for example, that some wardens are allowing second housing unit officers to leave their workstations once inmates are "secured" inside their cells. We respectfully request an update on current BOP staffing practices at high security institutions, including a detailed report on the implementation of the two officer minimum policy in housing units and any exceptions or exemptions that have been made to it.

We understand the inherent dangers of these jobs and remain fully committed to ensuring the brave men and women of BOP have the resources they need to do them safely. That's why Congress provided over \$7 billion to BOP earlier this year for salaries and expenses in fiscal year 2018. That was a \$29 million increase over the President's budget request and a \$106 million increase over fiscal year 2017 funding levels.


Along with the funding, the Senate report accompanying the fiscal year 2018 appropriations law included clear directions to BOP to “curtail its overreliance on augmentation and instead hire full-time correctional staff before continuing to augment existing staff.” We continue to be concerned about augmentation as evidenced by the Senate Commerce Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee-approved report for fiscal year 2019 which states, “The Committee again directs BOP to curtail its overreliance on augmentation, particularly in housing units.” In your response to this letter, please also provide an update on the status of ongoing efforts to hire more full-time correctional officers and reduce the BOP’s over-reliance on augmentation.

As Members of Congress representing the great states of West Virginia and Pennsylvania, we are proud to have BOP facilities in our states, but we cannot allow these dangerous staffing practices to continue. We look forward to your response and remain committed to working with the leadership at BOP to solve these problems.

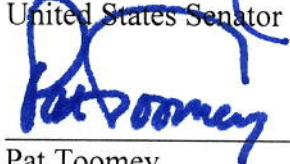
With warmest regards,



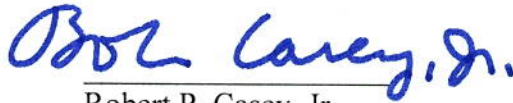
Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator




Shelley Moore Capito  
United States Senator



Pat Toomey  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Bill Shuster  
U.S. Representative

Cc: The Honorable Rod Rosenstein, Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice  
The Honorable Hugh Hurwitz, Acting Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons