

GERALD E. CONNOLLY

11TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA
2238 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-1492

FAIRFAX OFFICE:

4115 ANNANDALE ROAD
SUITE 103
ANNANDALE, VA 22003
(703) 256-3071

PRINCE WILLIAM OFFICE:

2241-D TACKETT'S MILL DRIVE
WOODBIDGE, VA 22192
(571) 408-4407

The Honorable Matthew T. Albence
Acting Director
United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20536-5003

Dear Acting Director Albence,

I write to express my deep concerns with significant increases in the number of detainees at the Farmville Detention Center who have either tested positive for COVID-19 or are exhibiting symptoms of this disease. I have also received numerous reports from family members who cite lack of test kits, PPE, and other medical supplies and equipment.

Within the last several days, I have been made aware of at least seven detainees from the Northern Virginia region who were exhibiting symptoms but at the time had not been tested. Included among these is a detainee who finally received his test, which came back positive. This particular individual suffers from sleep apnea but has not received a CPAP machine to aid his breathing.

NBC news reported that as of July 9, 106 detainees tested positive for COVID-19 and NPR reported today that more than 70% of the population at Farmville are suffering from this disease. This sudden and unacceptable outbreak appears to be linked to or exacerbated by a transfer in June of 74 individuals from Arizona and Florida who ostensibly were not isolated to prevent a possible spread of infection. Nine days after the transfer, three people who were part of these groups tested positive. Also, according to NPR, testing results on the remainder of transferees was not available until June 22 – approximately three weeks after their arrival in Farmville. 47 of the transferred individuals tested positive at that time.

It is unconscionable and inhumane to detain people in the conditions that have been allowed to fester at the Farmville Detention Center. I am requesting specific information on the safety protocols being followed at Farmville including social distancing, the availability of PPE, isolation and quarantining of those diagnosed with or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, and availability of other related equipment such as the above referenced CPAP. I further request a detailed explanation of safety improvements that are being discussed and the timeframe for implementation.

Since it is clear that ICE cannot or will not take the steps necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of those who are in detention, I again call on ICE to immediately release all detainees so that they can seek the relative safety of their homes during this pandemic. ICE has the ability through electronic monitoring, telephone check-ins, and other means to oversee the movements of the released individuals. Keeping these people in detention will surely result in increased illnesses and death and is a violation of true American values.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress
11th District, Virginia

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4611

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