



COUNTY JUDGE

Fort Bend County, Texas

The Honorable KP George
County Judge

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May 6, 2020

To the Members of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice,

We, Elected Officials of Fort Bend County, write to you to stop sending COVID-19 positive prisoners to Jester Prison in Richmond. We are a major suburb of Houston with a population of over 800,000 people. This is not a rural or isolated place. We are working around the clock to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus, but with your unilateral decision to send your COVID-19 positive prisoners, we are taking on additional risk.

Fort Bend County according to DSHS databases is the top County in Texas for testing per capita to help aggressively stop the spread. We will not allow a mandate from Austin to change that ranking and put our citizens at risk for getting coronavirus and going backward to shutting down our economy again. We fully agree with House Speaker Dennis Bonnen and Brazoria County Judge Sebesta when they said the same thing when after they complained about the COVID prisoners in their county. Well now we are also saying, no, so put them in a facility far away from highly populated communities.

Thousands of Fort Bend residents have signed a petition expressing their disapproval, which is attached to this letter. We do not have oversight or control over this facility, so we cannot put in place the testing and safety practices we have done in the rest of the county.

If you refuse to change your policy, then we insist on answering these questions below so we have some way to know what is happening inside the prison system and can do what is in our limited power to protect our community. Our questions are:

Contagious State Inmates at Jester Prison:

1. How many COVID-19 positive inmates are currently in the Jester Prison?
2. How many of these prisoners are still symptomatic?
3. How many are in a hospital?
4. How many have died since arriving in Richmond?
5. How many COVID-19 criminals are in all State prisons?
6. Of all the State prisoners with coronavirus, how many will be transferred to Fort Bend County?
7. What method are you using to transfer the prisoners?
8. What highways and roads are you using for transfer?
9. Where did you move the prisoners from Unit 1 in order to use it to house your contagious ones?
10. What is the total crowding now in the other units at Jester?
11. How is the 14 day quarantine done in the prison?
12. Are prisoners tested to determine they are no longer positive? How many times are they tested?
13. How are the tests reported? Will the test results be submitted to our HHS to be included in our total County count of positive cases on our public website?
14. Where is the state getting test kits? Who is the maker of the test kits?
15. What are you doing with the prisoners after they test negative? Are they transferred back to their previous prison where they got coronavirus?

Employees, Staff and Vendors at Jester Prison

1. Have any employees, staff or vendors tested positive for COVID-19?
2. If the answer to the previous question is more than zero, how many are hospitalized? How many are quarantined and where? How many have died?
3. How many of the TDCJ employees and staff live on the Jester Campus? How many live outside the prison and in Fort Bend County?
4. How many vendors enter the prison who live in Fort Bend County?
5. How are staff/vendors screened before entering the prison?
6. How are they protected from getting coronavirus themselves? Are they provided with masks? Protective shields? Enforced social distancing at all times in the prison?
7. What precautions are taken when they leave the facility in order to reduce the risk of spreading the virus to their homes and the community?
8. Are they being tested for COVID-19? If so, how frequently?
9. Where is the state getting test kits for the staff? Who is the maker of the test kits?
10. How are the tests reported? Will the test results be submitted to our HHS to be included in our total County count of positive cases on our public website?

Prison Unit Health Issues:

1. What is the form of ventilation in each housing unit? Are the units ventilation shared in any way?
2. How often are the housing units sanitized?
3. Are prisoners at all times social distanced by a minimum of six feet?
4. Do contagious prisoners sleep in units with multiple beds?
5. Do contagious prisoners share showers and bathrooms?
6. How are the shared spaces sanitized to stop spreading the virus?
7. Are prisoners wearing masks at all times? How is this enforced?
8. Is there enforcement for prisoners to wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds? How many times a day is this done?
9. Are families of the prisoners given access? If so, how are they protected from spreading the virus? If no, then how are families informed of the health or death of a prisoner?

You are well aware that we want these prisoners removed from our County immediately. We will not stop pursuing this matter in all manners -- whether ballot or court room -- to ensure the health and safety of the innocent and productive members of society here in Fort Bend County. We hope to get your response within 48 hours.

Sincerely,

KP George, Fort Bend County Judge

Wayne Thompson, Fort Bend County Constable Precinct 3

Ron Reynolds, Texas State Representative - HD 27