

April 23, 2020

Mr. Andrew Kenney, County Director
Maury County Health Department
1909 Hampshire Pike
Columbia, TN 38401

Dear Director Kenney:

We hope you are safe and well during this difficult time and know this is a challenging time as you work to ensure the health of Maury County residents. We are writing to urge you to engage Sheriff Rowland, if you have not already, to ensure all incarcerated individuals and custodial staff in their facilities have access to testing and appropriate protective gear. This is critical to ensuring the public health and safety not only of people living and working behind bars but those in the wider community. [In fact, data released yesterday shows that nationwide nearly 100,000 more people could die from COVID-19 in jails and surrounding communities than most current projections estimate if states fail to reduce incarcerated populations.](#) We believe it is critical that evidence-based and proactive plans, similar to the [action plan](#) for long-term care facilities recently announced by the Tennessee Department of Health, be created and implemented for the prevention and management of COVID-19 at the Maury County Jail.

As you know, people in county jails are highly vulnerable to outbreaks of contagious illnesses. They are housed in close quarters and are often in poor health. Without your guidance, along with the appropriate resources and support, the Maury County correctional system has little to no ability to take preventive measures to keep those incarcerated or their staff safe and healthy.

We ask that you immediately reach out to Sheriff Rowland, if you have not already, to arrange to provide tests and protective equipment as well as to develop plans to address the virus within the local jail system. These resources and an appropriate, evidence-based plan in place will help prevent an outbreak and minimize its impact if one does occur. Most importantly, it will save lives.

Without a significant reduction in the population at Maury County Jail, complete social distancing consistent with the CDC's recommendations is simply impossible. As a result, all staff and all people incarcerated face increased risk of infection, complications, and death. Even if the population is not reduced, there are preventive measures that can reduce the risk and save lives.

- **Screening and testing of the people in custody:** The plan must include guidance, based on the best science available, on how and when to screen and test people in local facilities for the virus and also increase access to testing.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** PPE is used every day by healthcare personnel to protect themselves and patients. The same is necessary for staff and people in local custody. A plan should include ways to supply the gear



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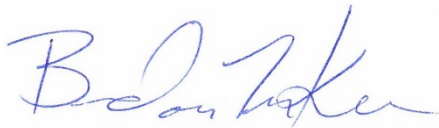
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necessary to protect the jail from an outbreak, in turn protecting the communities that both staff and those who are incarcerated will return to.

- **Provision of hygiene and cleaning supplies:** The most basic aspect of infection control is hygiene. There must be ready access to warm water and adequate hygiene and cleaning supplies, both for handwashing and the cleaning of telephones and equipment that incarcerated people use, which must be cleaned between each use as contaminated surfaces can spread the virus.
- **Education of the staff:** Correctional, administrative and medical staff all must be educated by their local department of health about the virus to protect themselves and their families, as well as the people in their custody.
- **Data collection:** The collection of data regarding COVID-19 is an essential part of the public health response. As with any contagious disease, data collection is critical to understanding and fighting the virus. The local jail system must be part of this process. The same information that is tracked in the community must be tracked in the jails or we risk grossly underestimating the number of infections and deaths this virus will produce in our communities.

These recommendations have been informed by conversations with law enforcement and with those who are most at risk inside of our county jails throughout the state. If you have already taken steps to create a plan inside your local jail, we request that you share a copy of that plan. Please contact us if you have any questions or thoughts. Thank you for all that you do and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Brandon Tucker
Policy Director

cc: Sheriff Bucky Rowland, Maury County

