



October 29, 2018

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear President Trump:

I write today to urge you to appoint a reform-minded individual to serve as Director of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) as soon as possible. The BOP has been without a permanent director since General Mark Inch's resignation from the post in May of this year. The void in consistent leadership has caused and exacerbated numerous problems throughout the federal prison system, for both staff and those in custody.

FAMM is in contact with over 35,000 federal prisoners and their family members on a regular basis. Through our correspondence, we have learned of continual problems plaguing the BOP's programs and operations. We hear frequently from prisoners and their families about the lack of adequate medical care or medical attention when requested. We continue to hear about last-minute reductions in halfway house time and continued underutilization of home confinement for low-risk individuals. We have seen the BOP routinely neglect its role in identifying eligible candidates for the federal compassionate release program, which would allow the courts to consider resentencing terminally ill or elderly prisoners. We have also learned of several BOP facilities instituting questionable and problematic policies regarding family visits and limiting prisoner access to mail from their loved ones as well as access to books. Because education and strong family ties are proven to help in the rehabilitation of prisoners, these policies pose a significant threat to successful rehabilitation and should be reversed under new leadership.

In addition to its impact on prisoners, the lack of consistent leadership has been felt among BOP staff. Throughout the last year, numerous reports recount staff cuts in BOP facilities that create a significant gap in coverage among the guards. This has led to an increased use of so-called augmentation, in which non-correctional staff are pulled from their jobs to guard prisoners. There have been repeated instances of staff such as social workers, teachers and into guard duty. This practice presents a major security risk for prisoners and staff members alike. Only BOP staff with the experience and training in guarding and handling prisoners should be put in these positions.

FAMM believes that these issues could be mitigated under a consistent, qualified leader in the BOP. While federal law dictates that the Attorney General appoint a new BOP director, we believe the White House should take the lead in finding a qualified director and should do so as soon as possible. There should not be a shortage of experienced and qualified candidates. All across the country, state directors of corrections are pioneering new approaches to improving prison programming and rehabilitation with a focus on reducing recidivism. Available evidence clearly indicates that a focus on programming, education, and workforce development benefit public safety more than simply incapacitating offenders.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin A. Ring". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "K".

Kevin Ring
President, FAMM