



December 15, 2020

The Honorable Doug Ducey
1700 W. Washington St., 9th Floor
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Via email

Dear Governor Ducey:

We write to request that you immediately remove and replace David Shinn as director of the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR). We make this grave request because the thousands of families we represent, who have loved ones inside Arizona's prisons, have no confidence that their incarcerated loved ones will be kept safe.

Calling for the removal and replacement of a corrections official is serious, and we do not undertake this request lightly. This comes after months of Director Shinn's silence in response to crisis after crisis inside Arizona state prisons. We understand that Director Shinn inherited problems from the previous director, but his lack of transparency and inadequate responses to [a riot](#), [persistently insufficient medical care](#), [inedible food](#), [contaminated water](#), and a [raging COVID-19 outbreak](#) make prisons less safe for the people who live and work there. The short-term solution is a different director. The long-term solution must be the creation of independent oversight of ADCRR that brings real transparency, accountability, and improvement.

We have no personal animosity or ill will towards Director Shinn and had high hopes that his appointment would bring positive reforms and new transparency to the ADCRR. Over the last 15 months, we have instead seen Director Shinn fail to hold press conferences, [limit media access](#) to facilities and incarcerated people, create rules that discourage and penalize staff whistleblowers from speaking with the media, and [terminate whistleblowers](#) under questionable circumstances.

In the meantime, conditions of confinement have worsened in Arizona prisons. Incarcerated people consistently report that there is inadequate staffing, food, clean water, health care, sanitation, email and video visitation with families, access to information, and protection from retaliation for those who raise concerns. These complaints pre-dated Director Shinn and persist under his tenure. COVID-19 has created new concerns: lack of sufficient soap, sanitizer, testing, and personal protective equipment; failure of staff to wear masks; inability of prisoners to communicate with family members; lack of information about outbreaks, medical care, and the ADCRR's remedial actions; food and staff shortages. Widespread outbreaks of COVID-19 in Arizona's prisons may have been likely or even inevitable, but the ADCRR's lack of transparency and corrective action has left families and incarcerated people uninformed, frightened, and outraged.

Incarcerated people are people. The requirements of any faith and the U.S. Constitution entitle them to humane treatment and dignity. More than 40,000 Arizona families miss their incarcerated loved ones dearly, fear for them constantly, and long for their safe return home. Arizona families are not unreasonable to demand better leadership, more transparency, and increased accountability from the government agency that costs them more than one billion tax dollars annually and makes daily life-or-death decisions about their dearest loved ones.

We know that running prisons is difficult even under the best circumstances. Prisons should be safe, healthy environments that help people rehabilitate themselves so that they leave better than they entered. No one leaves prison better when incarceration is an unhealthy, traumatic, and dehumanizing experience, but that is what most incarcerated people in Arizona experience now. Arizona can do better. We think doing better starts with new leadership at the ADCRR.

We are available to discuss this request more with you or your staff, and you can contact us at mgill@famm.org or lcoppess@azstartproject.org. Thank you for considering our request and our views.

Sincerely,

Molly Gill
Vice President of Policy, FAMM

Lillian Coppess
President, The START Project

cc: Director David Shinn, ADCRR