



April 25, 2023

The Honorable Todd Rokita
Office of the Indiana Attorney General
Indiana Government Center South
302 W. Washington St., 5th Floor
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Attorney General Rokita:

In response to recent media coverage of the August 10, 2021, death of Joshua McLemore at the Jackson County jail, we write to urge you to perform an investigation of his death and any criminal or civil rights violations attendant to it, and share the investigation findings publicly.

The facts emerging around Mr. McLemore's death have recently become national news. FAMM is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit sentencing and prison reform organization in Washington, DC. Because our national membership includes tens of thousands of incarcerated people and their families, one of our priorities is to increase accountability and transparency in corrections by supporting independent prison and jail oversight nationwide. We are not against prisons or punishment. We simply want prisons and jails to be safe, healthy facilities for incarcerated people and staff alike. One form that oversight can take is investigations of questionable deaths and jail conditions by offices like yours.

Mr. McLemore's story suggests that the Jackson County jail may be systematically failing to protect the health and safety of people within it and committing serious criminal and civil rights violations. Mr. McLemore was only 29 years old and suffering from schizophrenia during his time in the Jackson County jail. He was left naked, unattended, and untended during that time, lost 45 pounds, and was finally hospitalized and died of malnourishment and organ failure. A federal lawsuit is pending. The neglect suffered by Mr. McLemore may be endemic at the Jackson County jail, and to our knowledge no one at the jail has yet been disciplined or held accountable for his mistreatment and death.

We have also written to the Indiana Department of Corrections' County Jails Services Division and asked them to perform an additional audit of the Jackson County jail and make the audit findings available to state and local officials and the public. An audit can reveal whether the jail is complying with Indiana's jail standards. It cannot, however, hold the responsible people accountable for criminal violations or compel remedies to system-wide civil rights violations.

We believe that undertaking an investigation and making its conclusions available to policymakers and the public is essential to increasing transparency and accountability in the Jackson County jail's operations. State and local officials need to understand these failures in order to improve Jackson County jail conditions and prevent others from suffering Mr.

McLemore's fate. The public deserves to know if the Jackson County jail is properly caring for their incarcerated loved ones. The McLemore family deserves to have those who committed criminal or civil rights violations held accountable.

We hope you will launch an investigation into conditions at the Jackson County jail and share your conclusions publicly, to increase accountability and transparency in the jail's operations.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Kevin Ring
President