



April 25, 2023

Chance Sweat
Executive Director
Indiana County Jail Services Division
Indiana Department of Corrections

Jeff Groh
Jail Inspector – Southern Region

Dear Mr. Sweat and Mr. Groh:

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 immediate audit of that facility, and make the findings of that audit available to state lawmakers, county officials, and the public on your website.

The facts emerging around Mr. McLemore's untimely and preventable death from neglect and starvation are now 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. Mr. McLemore's story suggests that the Jackson County jail is failing to protect the health and safety of people within it.

We are encouraged that you have the power to audit county jails and monitor their compliance with Indiana's jail standards. The horrifying facts of Mr. McLemore's 20 days in custody warrant an additional audit of the Jackson County jail. In particular, we hope such an audit would focus on whether the jail is complying with best practices regarding the monitoring and care of people with serious mental illnesses and ensuring that these people receive clothing, medication, adequate and nutritious food, time out of doors, and regular interaction with others.

We believe that making the audit findings 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.

Thank you for considering our views, and for your work to monitor Indiana's jails.

Sincerely,

Kevin Ring
President