

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 18, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Mr. Tony H. Pham
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Mr. Pham:

Since June, we have sent your agencies several letters regarding cases of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities in Farmville, Virginia and Bowling Green, Virginia, to which we have not received responses. We write today regarding news reports that two more people detained at the Caroline Detention Facility in Bowling Green tested positive for COVID-19 last week.¹

In early June, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, ICE transferred over 70 detainees to the Immigration Centers of America Farmville (Farmville ICA) facility from COVID-19 hotspots in Florida and Arizona. Within two weeks of their transfer, more than half of these detainees tested positive for COVID-19. Prior to the transfers, the facility had only a few cases of the virus. In August, the Farmville facility had at times a nearly 90% infection rate among detainees, including James Thomas Hill, a Canadian national, who tragically died on August 5. Throughout the pandemic, we have sounded the alarm on the dangers of inter-facility transfers.

Yet, on September 8, ICE asked a federal judge to lift the current ban on transfers into the Farmville facility that was placed after a lawsuit against ICE and the facility. ICE argued that if the ban were to be lifted, newly detained people would isolate for at least 14 days at the Caroline Detention Facility before moving to the Farmville facility. Particularly in light of the new COVID-19 cases at the Caroline facility, we continue to adamantly oppose any transfers of detainees into the Virginia ICE detention facilities.

We must prioritize the health and well-being of the detainees and staff at both facilities, as well as the Farmville and Bowling Green communities. In order to assist in keeping the Commonwealth safe, we have several questions concerning how ICE is protecting the health of the individuals in your custody and staff members at the Caroline facility, as well as the larger Bowling Green community. Please reply by September 25, 2020.

1. How is ICE ensuring that staff members and detainees at the Caroline detention facility properly wear masks and other PPE? How has ICE implemented social distancing practices at the Caroline detention facility?
2. Please explain how ICE is utilizing contact tracing to ascertain other people with whom an infected person has been in contact.
3. Did ICE immediately notify the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) about the two new COVID-19 cases at the Caroline detention facility?

We appreciate your attention to these issues.



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator

¹ https://richmond.com/news/ice-confirms-two-covid-positive-cases-in-caroline-countys-immigrant-detention-center/article_29e52afb-a827-58a9-98f8-a4cb07357edc.html