

August 20, 2020

The Honorable William Barr  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr:

I write with dissatisfaction that the Department of Justice (DOJ) has not sufficiently responded to inquiries I have made in regard to Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) Coleman, located in Sumter County, Florida.

Nearly nine months ago, on December 9, 2019, I wrote to request that you conduct a review of all Bureau of Prisons (BOP) inmate and staff protocols, processes, reporting systems, and employee reviews after the *Miami Herald* published disturbing allegations of sexual abuse in the women's camp at FCI Coleman. The *Herald* reported that more than a dozen female inmates alleged specific and detailed instances of sexual abuse at the hands of BOP employees, and were subjected to retaliatory punishment when they filed complaints. My office has not received a substantive response, or any indication that these abhorrent allegations were investigated.

On April 7, 2020, I followed up on this request, and urged you to investigate FCI Coleman as part of DOJ's task force to address systemic misconduct by BOP personnel, which was announced in March 2020. Again, my office has not received a substantive response to this inquiry, and to date, the DOJ has not formed this task force or announced the facilities where oversight will be directed.

Separately, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges to detention practices in our federal prison system. BOP staff and the inmates in their care are at increased risk due to the congregate and enclosed environment where individuals live, eat, and work in group settings. Extra care must be taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in federal prisons. To date, two FCI Coleman inmates have died from COVID-19, and there are 245 active cases among inmates and 96 active cases among staff.

Recognizing these challenges, in March BOP issued new policies that include reducing the federal inmate population, limiting inmate transfers between facilities, and quarantining new arrivals. However, my office continues to receive numerous complaints that FCI Coleman staff are not following the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC's) Guidance for Correctional and Detention Facilities, which – among other measures – recommends BOP officers and inmates

wear masks when in close proximity with others. Most concerning, my office has been made aware that facility management may have ordered staff to return to work despite testing positive for COVID-19. I have already requested the BOP take immediate action to address this allegation, and I look forward to the outcome of its investigation.

The delay in meaningfully responding to congressional oversight has eroded trust in the BOP, and has potentially endangered its staff, and the inmates in their care. FCI Coleman is BOP's largest facility, with over 7,000 inmates and 1,300 staff. I request an update on the status of the prison task force and further request to expand my previous request to include FCI Coleman's implementation and observance of the CDC's COVID-19 guidance to correctional facilities.

It is our shared goal that all BOP staff and individuals in their custody and care have a safe environment in which to work or serve their debt to society. My office stands ready to assist you in this endeavor.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Rubio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "R" followed by "ubio".

Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator