

— LOUISIANA —

STOP SOLITARY COALITION

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL TO: MICHAEL@LSA.ORG

August 2, 2021

RE: Jail COVID Transfers and Re-Opening of Camp J.

Dear Mr. Ranatza:

We as the Louisiana Stop Solitary Coalition write to you as a united group of 500+ advocates, formerly incarcerated persons, impacted family members, community members, faith leaders, health professionals, and attorneys.

It has come to our attention that, in response to rising COVID-19 cases, the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DOC) has once again authorized the use of Louisiana State Penitentiary's condemned Camp J to house incarcerated persons. Camp J, before it was rightfully closed by the DOC in 2018, was a notorious facility, akin to a dungeon, used for segregation, solitary confinement, and punishment. It's harsh and restrictive conditions created serious mental health issues for not only incarcerated persons, but also for correctional officers, with more than 85 officers assigned to Camp J leaving or being reassigned in a single year. In every way it is an inappropriate facility to administer medical care and was never intended to be used for that purpose.

Last year, the DOC opened Camp J for use by sheriffs to house COVID-positive people from their local correctional facilities. The plan did not have good outcomes for the health of the people transferred, who often took more than a month to subsequently test negative. It was not broadly used by sheriffs, and it was costly. From our conversations, we also heard that incarcerated people with COVID-like symptoms hid those symptoms instead of reporting them, for fear of transfer to Camp J. After some months, this plan was discontinued.

Louisiana is only as healthy as our most vulnerable people. Throughout the pandemic, [Doctors and Professors from Tulane and Louisiana State University](#),⁽¹⁾ [clinicians and medical students](#),⁽²⁾ and [public health experts](#)⁽³⁾ have reiterated the [national guidance from the CDC](#)⁽⁴⁾ about preventing the spread of this virus through social distancing and sanitation methods. All advise that a drastic reduction of incarcerated populations is required to achieve the CDC's recommendations. [Doctors and health officials](#) have also described the differences between medical isolation and solitary, and note that the use of punitive methods for those with COVID-19 or its symptoms may exacerbate the spread of the virus.⁽⁵⁾ **More incarcerated people may be dissuaded from reporting symptoms**

of the virus if they believe the response is transfer to Camp J or lockdown of their unit if they admit they are feeling ill. Lockdown and solitary also decrease the interaction between staff and incarcerated persons, allowing symptoms to accelerate to dangerous levels before the facility can take proper precautions. As stated best by several corrections officials in a [webinar](#), *there is no public safety without public health.*^[6] For these reasons, we ask that you **refrain from the use of lockdown or solitary - including the use of Camp J - to achieve medical isolation.**

Thank you for your consideration of our request and your work to keep the men and women in your custody safe and healthy. Please consider the Louisiana Stop Solitary Coalition a resource and reach out with any thoughts, questions, or concerns. We would be interested in working with you to find other ways to safely quarantine the people incarcerated in your facility on or off site, including through accessing the \$700 million in funding announced by the White House.

Signed,

The Louisiana Stop Solitary Coalition
www.lastopsolitary.org
Jail Working Group Contacts: Sherie Thomas (Sherie@JACLouisiana.org) and Reverend Alexis Anderson (preachisliteracy@gmail.com)

Cc:

Acadia Parish Sheriff K.P. Gibson
bart.habetz@apso.org
kelly.gibson@apso.org

Allen Parish Sheriff Douglas L. Hebert
info@allenparishso.com
jail@allenparishso.com

Ascension Parish Sheriff Robert Webre
Phall@ascensionsheriff.com

Assumption Parish Sheriff Leland Falcon
cjacobs@assumptionsheriff.com
lfalcon@assumptionsheriff.com

Avoyelles Parish Sheriff David Dauzat
mail@avoyelleso.org

dldauzat@avoyelleso.org
sheriff@avoyelleso.org

Beauregard Parish Sheriff Mark Herford
mherford@bpsheriff.org
jirvine@bpsheriff.org
jmorton@bpsheriff.org
jherrington@cityofderidder.org

Bienville Parish Sheriff John E. Ballance
jballance@bienvillesheriff.org
mbarrett@bpsheriff.org

Bossier Parish Sheriff Julian C. Whittington
traci.landry@bossiercity.org
njohnston@bossiersheriff.com
jwhittington@bossiersheriff.com

Caddo Parish Sheriff Stephen W. Prator
steve.prator@caddosheriff.org
dfrazier@caddo.org
cwalker@caddo.org
welcome@caddosheriff.org
arneda.anderson@shreveportla.gov

Calcasieu Parish Sheriff Tony Mancuso
info@cpsso.com
tmancuso@cpsso.com

Caldwell Parish Sheriff Clay Bennett
lawman1@kriicket.net
Patsy.bailey@caldwellsheriff.org

Cameron Parish Sheriff Ronald Johnson
ron@cameronso.org
info@cameronso.org

Catahoula Parish Sheriff Toney Edwards
toney_cpsso@att.net
catahoulahsep@yahoo.com
catahoulaclerk13@gmail.com

jrousla@aol.com

Claiborne Parish Sheriff Sam Dowies
sam.dowies@claibornesherriff.org

Concordia Parish Sheriff David Hedrick
dhedrick@concordiasheriff.org

DeSoto Parish Sheriff Jayson Richardson
corrections@dpsso.org

East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff Sid J. Gautreaux
sgautreaux@ebrso.org

East Carroll Parish Sheriff Wydette Williams
sheriff@ecsheriff.com
wwilliams@ecsheriff.com
wydettw@gmail.com

East Feliciana Parish Sheriff Jeff Travis
jtravis@efpso.org

Evangeline Parish Sheriff Charles Guillory
sheriffcrguillory.epso@gmail.com

Franklin Parish Sheriff Sheriff Kevin Cobb
info@franklinsheriff.net
kevincobb@franklinsheriff.net

Grant Parish Sheriff Steven McCain
mccain@grantso.org

Iberia Parish Sheriff Thomas Romero
TOROMERO@IBERIASO.ORG

Iberville Parish Sheriff Brett M. Stassi
brettstassi@gmail.com

Jackson Parish Sheriff Andy Brown
abrown@jacksonparishsheriff.com

Jefferson Davis Parish Sheriff Ivy Woods
sheriff@jdpso.org

Jefferson Parish Sheriff Joseph P. Lopinto
lopinto_jp@jpso.us
Songy_ts@jpso.com
Coulon_lc@JPSO.com

LaSalle Parish Sheriff Scott Franklin
info@lasalleso.com
sfranklin@lasalleso.com

Lafayette Parish Sheriff Mark Garber
john.mowell@lafayettesheriff.com
garberlawyer@gmail.com

Lafourche Parish Sheriff Craig Webre
craig-webre@lpso.net

Lincoln Parish Sheriff Stephen Williams
sheriff@lincolnparish.org
swilliams@lincolnparish.org

Livingston Parish Sheriff Jason G. Ard
jard@lpso.org

Madison Parish Sheriff Sammie Byrd
sammiebyrd@madisonso.com

Morehouse Parish Sheriff Mike Tubbs
sheriff@mpso.net

Natchitoches Parish Sheriff Stuary Wright
swright@npsheriff.net

Orleans Parish Sheriff Marlin N. Gusman
mgusman@opso.us

Ouachita Parish Sheriff Jay Russell
Glenn.Springfield@OPSO.net

Plaquemines Parish Sheriff Gerald A. Turlich
SheriffTurlich@ppso.net
jburas@ppso.net
wantoine@ppso.net
bwilliamsjr@ppso.net

Pointe Coupee Parish Sheriff Rene Thibodeaux
rthibodeaux@pcpsa.org

Rapides Parish Sheriff William Mark Wood
mwood@rpsa.la.gov

Red River Parish Sheriff Glen Edwards
sheriffedwards@redrivercable.com

Richland Parish Sheriff Gary Gilley
ggilley@richlandso.org

Sabine Parish Sheriff Aaron Mitchell
a.mitchell@sabinesheriff.org

St. Bernard Parish Sheriff James Pohlmann
jroderfeld@sbso.org

St. Charles Parish Sheriff Gregory C. Champagne
sheriffgc@stcharlessheriff.org

St. Helena Parish Sheriff Nathaniel Williams
nathanielw@sthelenaso.org

St. James Parish Sheriff Willy J. Martin
sheriff@stjamessheriff.com
willy.martin@stjamesla.com

St. John the Baptist Parish Sheriff Michael Tregre
sheriff@stjohnsheriff.org

St. Landry Parish Sheriff Bobby J. Guidroz
bguidroz@slpsheriff.com

St. Martin Parish Sheriff Becket Breaux

bbreaux@stmartinsheriff.org

St. Mary Parish Sheriff Blaise Smith
sheriff@stmaryso.com

St. Tammany Parish Sheriff Randy Smith
support@sheriffmandysmith.com
SOR@stpsso.com
randysmith@stpsso.org

Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff Sheriff Daniel H. Edwards
edwardsd@tpso.org

Tensas Parish Sheriff Rickey A. Jones
rjones@tensasso.org

Terrebonne Parish Sheriff Timothy Soignet
tsoignet@tpso.net
dlandry@tpso.net

Union Parish Sheriff Dusty Gates
No Email Found

Vermilion Parish Sheriff Michael Couvillon
mike@vpso.net

Vernon Parish Sheriff John S. Craft
c_ashworthvpso@yahoo.com

Washington Parish Sheriff Randy Seal
rseal@wpso.la.gov
country@i-55.com

Webster Parish Sheriff Jason Parker
jparker@webstersheriff.org

West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff Michael B. Cazes
danita.ricard@wbrsheriff.org
cazesmike@yahoo.com

West Carroll Parish Sheriff Scott Mathews

sheriff@westcarrollsheriff.net

West Feliciana Parish Sheriff Brian L. Spillman
bspillman@wfpso.org

Winn Parish Sheriff Cranford Jordan
No Email Found

[1] *Public Health Letter to Governor Edwards*, (March 27, 2020), <https://www.scribd.com/document/453999944/Public-Health-Letter-to-Gov-Edwards>.

[2] Marcia Glass, *Health Care Professionals Demand the Reduction of Orleans Jail Population*, Medium (March 31, 2020), <https://medium.com/@marciaglass/health-care-professionals-demand-the-reduction-of-orleans-jail-population-40eac4348778>.

[3] *An open letter regarding COVID-19 and jails in Orleans Parish, Louisiana*, (March 25, 2020), <https://sph.tulane.edu/open-letter-covid19-jail>.

[4] *Interim Guidance on Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/guidance-correctional-detention.html>.

[5] David Cloud, et.al., *The Ethical Use of Medical Isolation – Not Solitary Confinement – to Reduce COVID-19 Transmission in Correctional Settings*, AMEND, April 9, 2020 https://amend.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Medical-Isolation-vs-Solitary_Amend.pdf.

[6] *COVID-19 and Prisons: Centering Human Dignity Across Decarceration, Reentry, and Operations*, VERA Institute of Justice, <https://www.vera.org/research/covid-19-and-prisons>.