



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

WALT J. PESTERFIELD, *Director*
Department of Corrections

Deborah St. Jean, Esq.
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March 16, 2023

Dear Ms. St. Jean:

I am writing in response to your letter dated March 6, 2023, regarding juveniles held at the Baltimore County Detention Center (“BCDC”).

I have had the opportunity to review your letter. Please know that the administration shares your concerns regarding appropriate placement and treatment of juvenile offenders. Even before receipt of your letter, the County Executive directed me in my newly-confirmed role as Director of Corrections to identify areas for improvement at BCDC. Since starting my position earlier this year, we have started to make necessary changes. Our continued review of practices and policies of the detention center is focused on providing optimal conditions for all inmates served by the facility.

As you may know, BCDC houses inmates awaiting bail review, pre-trial inmates, and inmates serving a sentence up to one year and one day. The facility houses adult offenders and juvenile offenders who are charged as an adult and ordered by the Court to be held as an adult. BCDC does not make the determination about where an inmate is held, or for how long. As of the writing of this letter, there are fourteen (14) juvenile detainees at BCDC – thirteen (13) males and one (1) female.

As we continue this facility-wide review, it is important to acknowledge that for the last three (3) years, BCDC has operated under strict COVID-19 restrictions. Although restrictions have significantly decreased across the region, the detention center is its own ecosystem, and it has been critical for the facility to continue to operate with restrictions to protect the safety and lives of those housed there.

At times those restrictions may impact the inmate population. While BCDC has begun to relax COVID-19 restrictions, the facility must remain mindful of the continuing impact of communicable illnesses, and how detainees are vulnerable to the rapid spread of those illnesses. I am closely evaluating current restrictions that were in place prior to my arrival, and will continue to reduce restrictions related to COVID-19 with diligence and care for the entire inmate population.



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In response to your letter, the County Executive has directed me and others in the administration, including Baltimore County's Deputy Administrative Officer for Public Safety to closely evaluate the facility's current conditions, policies, and practices, and to carefully investigate the claims raised in your letter.

It appears that in many cases, conditions were not found to be as described in your letter; however, the County has identified areas for improvement. We will be sure to follow-up with you once our investigation is fully completed, which we anticipate will be within the next thirty (30) days.

Baltimore County and BCDC remain fully committed to providing adequate housing for all inmates ordered to the detention center. We further recognize the unique challenges and requirements of youth housed in an adult facility such as BCDC.

Please be assured this administration will continue to closely monitor the status of juvenile detainees, and we will continue to work with our partners to identify and appropriately address areas of concern.

Sincerely,

Walt J. Pesterfield

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Director, Baltimore County Department of Corrections