

American Federation of Government Employees
Council of Prison Locals C-33
Local 1013



Cyndee L. Price, President

P. O. Box 413
Yazoo City, Mississippi 39219
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September 22, 2020

TO: HONORABLE TATE REEVES, GOVERNOR

Beginning September 1, 2020 FCC Yazoo City changed the mission of the United States Penitentiary (USP) to a Low security level institution. In August of 2020, the Agency advised they would be implementing these new changes. Management stated to Local Union No.1013, after September 1, 2020, the USP will be a Care Level II and In-Transit Holdover facility. The procedures they planned on implementing would be as follows:

- Beginning September 1, 2020, approximately four-hundred (400) inmates would be sent to the facility
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- Buses will be arriving daily to meet the USP component of inmate intake
- Inmates will be placed in uninhabited units and quarantined for fourteen (14) days

FCC Yazoo City is short one-hundred thirty-four staff throughout the Complex. FCC Yazoo City has now opened up eleven (11) of the housing units out of the twelve (12) available. Prior to September 1, 2020, there were no more than four (4) housing units open regularly. This was due to the staffing shortage we currently are facing. It is highly unfeasible for the Agency to take on more inmates when the staffing level has not been increased. This increases the inherent workload and changes the working conditions of the staff here at FCC Yazoo City. We do not have the staffing compliment to fulfill the needs of this institution, without causing undo stressors onto the staff. Our staff are tired, working sixteen (16) hours or more daily, seven days a week. Some have not seen their families days in a row due to the increase in work. Staff that work in other departments (non-custody) outside of being an officer (i.e teachers, secretaries, accountants, etc), are being removed from their hired positions and placed in officer (custody) positions. They are being utilized to work two different job assignments, while being only paid in one capacity. In addition these non-custody staff are still required to fulfill their job assignments and are being disciplined for not completing their jobs and/or not wanting to be reassigned to a custody position continuously. The Agency has called this Augmentation and there is no policy within the Bureau of Prisons where this is lawful.

The Appropriations Act of 2019, stated, "Although, the Federal inmate population continues to decline from its 2013 high, overcrowding remains a serious threat to correctional officer safety, particularly at high- and medium-security facilities. The Committee repeats its direction to BOP to end its overreliance on augmentation; hire more full-time correctional officers to eliminate the need

to augment them with non-custody employees; and improve staffing beyond mission critical levels in custody and all other departments. BOP shall continue to submit quarterly reports on inmate-to-officer ratios, including confirmation that at least two correctional officers are on duty for each shift at BOP facilities that house high security inmates, as specified in the fiscal year 2019 Appropriations Act."

Additionally, the inmates that have arrived to USP Yazoo City, from other agencies, have tested positive for COVID-19. From the onset of the Pandemic, FCC Yazoo City was at forty (40) percent affected with the Coronavirus. Miraculously, we were able to reduce that percentage to zero (0) until recently. By allowing these inmates to come into our facilities with this deadly virus, it not only puts the inmate population at risk, but staff as well. With that being a concern, it increases the chances of the staff taking the Coronavirus back into their communities and their families. That is a risk that we are being forced to take due to the Agency's negligence to ensure our safety. Our Collective Bargaining Agreement's (CBA), which is still in effect, language is clear in its respects of **Article 27 Section a. wherein it states, "There are essentially two (2) distinct areas of concern regarding the safety and health of employees in the Federal Bureau of Prisons: 1. the first, which affects the safety and well-being of employees, involves the inherent hazards of a correctional environment; and 2. the second, which affects the safety and health of employees, involves the inherent hazards associated with the normal industrial operations found throughout the Federal Bureau of Prisons."**

We do not have enough medical staff to meet the need of the Agency's change in the security level for the USP. In order to be a Care Level II facility, FCC Yazoo City will need ensure there are enough Medical Staff available to house sickly inmates, who need around the clock care. The Medical Department is short of staff as well and is already behind for the duties that need to be filled COVID-19

FCC Yazoo City has no contingency plan for COVID-19. Our Safety Department just failed the Corona Virus Response Team's unannounced visit from Washington D.C. This team comprised of Regional Medical Professionals who came to review the procedures at FCC Yazoo City implemented to ensure we were following proper protocol in decreasing the spread of the Coronavirus. Our Safety Department is not equipped to contain and minimize the spread within the facility. It is surely not equipped to decrease the potential spread from hundreds of individuals who are coming from across the country into our facilities.

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TO: HONORABLE CINDY HYDE-SMITH, SENATOR

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TO: HONORABLE ROGER WICKER, SENATOR

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