

[REDACTED]  
Airway Heights Corrections Center  
PO Box 2049  
Airway Heights, WA 99001

April 7, 2020

KREM 2 News  
4103 S. Regal St.  
Spokane, WA 99223

RE: prison response to COVID-19

To whom it may concern,

Hello. I am an inmate incarcerated at the Airway Heights Corrections Center (AHCC). I write to inform you of my concerns regarding the AHCC's lack of adequate prophylactic response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite DOC policy, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) protocols, and other preventative directives issued by Governor Jay Inslee and the Trump administration, AHCC staff continue to enter and exit the prison without being required to wear any breathing protection, i.e., surgical masks or respirators. This sustained practice not only threatens the lives and well being of the general population, it manifests unnecessary risk of reciprocal exposure to other staff whom can then unknowingly and asymptotically carry this highly contagious virus back to their family and social circle. Clearly, this is a cycle that cannot continue without notification to the risk of public safety to the public, as local news station KHQ 6 recently reported regarding several nurses whistleblowing how hospital administrators are failing to provide adequate protective gear to keep them and their patients from contracting COVID-19.

I would not be surprised to hear that the DOC is informing the public that it is taking the necessary precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19. However, if you were to simply wait in the main entrance foyer during shift change, or even peer through the fence at the officers and staff walking the walkways you will clearly see that by large staff are not wearing masks or other such protective gear.

After watching on TV public health officials, including Dr. Anthony Fauci and Dr. Marc Lipsitch, inform the public the importance of social distancing--let alone the need and mandate for protective breathing apparatuses--while in socially dense areas and the potentially lethal risks for not doing so during these times, it's hard to reconcile the DOC's indifference to its population--and public by extension--in not taking the most basic prophylactic measures. It is especially disconcerting under these circumstances considering that the DOC's screening process is a simple temperature check at the door, when it's reported that between 25-50% of COVID-19 carriers who can spread the disease are asymptomatic. The DOC is surely aware of the CDC's highly publicized literature to this effect and yet remains steadfast in its position to remain mask-optional within its prisons and among the population.

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In an effort to redress these concerns internally, I and several other incarcerated individuals have filed formal prison grievances to address this very issue only to be denied processing of our complaints for petty, inconsequential technicalities (e.g., complaint contains "more than one issue: 1. modified lock down, 2. extra staff, 3. masks on staff" [Grievance Log ID [REDACTED]). I have tried mailing copies of the memos I've received from DOC staff in prior letters as evidence to support my claims, but the mailroom continues to take my letters and infract me for stealing the memos-- the furthest thing from the truth.

I'm sure you've heard about the contraction rate of COVID-19 in nursing homes that have been televised. One figure I saw was 77 out of 95, roughly 81 percent. Well, in prison there is two individuals for every cell. Using these nursing home numbers, that means the contraction rate in here would be essentially double, 162 percent. And it is impossible to social distance in prison, regardless what the DOC may claim. Maybe on large walkways, but in the overcrowded living units where inmates spend most of their time? Sorry.

Given these dire circumstances, availability of breathing prophylactics to DOC staff, and preventative orders and policies in place to stop the spread of viral infections it is my position that the public should be made aware of perhaps the weakest link in the protective bubble our local community trying to establish to combat this virus. I am concerned about the health and safety of my friends and family in this area and believe that the usual channels available are no longer a viable option for the immediate remedies necessary to address these tenable concerns. For these reasons I implore you or someone from your syndicate investigate this matter as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]