



PIMA COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Chris Nanos, Sheriff

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December 5, 2022

Honorable Chair Sharon Bronson and
Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors
33 N. Stone Avenue, 11th Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701

RE: Pima County Adult Detention Complex Critical Issues

Dear Honorable Chair and Members Pima County Board of Supervisors:

The Pima County Adult Detention Complex's (PCADC) operational capability has degraded from that of a critical state to a full-blown crisis. I have delineated several issues below:

- Post COVID, the inmate population has reached a life-threatening level. With a 42% inmate population increase from COVID lows, we hover at 1,850 inmates. This places us at 92% capacity, where with classification restrictions, operationally you never want to be above 85%. With these classification restrictions, nearly 100 inmates must sleep on the floor.
- Corrections officer (CO) staffing has decreased by 30% and the attrition rate exceeds every effort to recruit, hire, and train corrections staff. Additionally, critical support staff levels like the Intake Support Specialists, those who handle booking of inmates, are so critically low the booking process can take up to three hours. This, along with patrol deputies handling corrections shifts to maintain safety at the jail, compromises my ability to respond to police calls.
- Overtime in the Corrections Bureau exceeds 5,900 hours per pay-period with corrections staff and deputies mandated to work 16-hour shifts. 18 months ago, that number was 350 hours per pay period. Mandated overtime is required to maintain appropriate staffing levels for the safety of inmates and staff. Budget projections put us at over \$9M by fiscal year's end - \$7M over the budgeted amount.
- Needless to say, morale is extremely low and the physical consequences we have seen include fatigue, increased sick use, and staff falling asleep on duty. This endangers staff and inmates. Completing timely rounds is nearly impossible and the sad consequence is increased risk of suicide attempts, inmate violence, and an increase in drug abuse.
- Just two weeks ago we averted - barely, a very dangerous situation when COs faced off 90 angry inmates who refused to lockdown. Fortunately, after an hour-long negotiation, staff was able to deescalate the situation. Still, inmates are becoming bolder and continue to challenge corrections staff. Physical altercations are on the rise, with the most recent being last Thursday when an inmate strangled a female CO who had just been on the job for 3 months. This CO was rendered unconscious for 24-minutes before medical personnel was able to revive her.

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- The 40-year-old PCADC is literally falling apart and a new facility is desperately needed. It is beyond repair and for the past two years we have simply been putting lipstick on a pig.

This crisis has no embellishments. As some of you have seen firsthand, it is real, it is urgent, it worsens and remains untenable. Every solution I am duty bound to advocate, requires your help. I ask that you please consider the following:

- **Short term** - So I may further aggressively recruit, hire, and retain corrections staff I am proposing an immediate salary increase of 7.5% effective January 1, 2023 for all COs and corrections sergeants. The annualized cost would amount to approximately \$1.79M and would provide increased incentives for recruitment.
- **Long term** - Use your authority to initiate an immediate ½ - cent "jail tax" and create a jail district. This would provide revenue to pay for competent staff, build a new correctional facility, as well as, relieve other Pima County law enforcement agencies from millions of dollars for inmate housing costs. The identification of a funding source for operational issues frees the individual cities and towns from paying the county for each inmate and can assist with what we know are already fiscally tight budgets.

We simply cannot wait for a ballot referendum. Kicking this can down the road is not the answer. All of you have told me personally and have spoken to your constituents affirming that you support law enforcement. The increase in violent crime and the epidemic of fentanyl and other ills challenging this community cannot be ignored and represent an escalating need for appropriate correctional and law enforcement services. I am asking you to recognize the opportunity to definitively address these challenges and avert disaster at this critical moment. Your actions can save lives...do not let this become political.

By establishing a foundation for improving safety, humane conditions, and security in this public safety environment, we will be poised to protect our constituents and to attend to our responsibilities to those involved in our criminal justice system. While we would all like to see fewer inmates in our jail, the reality of law enforcement and the inclination of the courts and probation do not signal a reduction. On the contrary, I believe we must brace for more of what is already stressing our correctional capability to a breaking point. We have a resilient community, but without our guardianship and good governance, the escalating crime and social problems have the potential to do irreparable harm. I urge you to join with me in proactively tackling this issue with a strategy to secure funds for these urgent community needs.

The facts I have listed are just a few of the many influences aggravating this crisis. The solutions I propose, may avert a catastrophe resulting in the loss of life, such as we have seen in other communities. It is my hope that we may learn from the disasters experienced by others and choose a more productive path. I implore you to act and act now.

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I have attached a news article from the [Albuquerque Journal](#) which mirrors the current crisis at the PCADC. Please feel free to reach out to me should you have any questions, concerns, or require additional information.

Respectfully,



Chris Nanos
Sheriff of Pima County

CN:cgv

Virtual Attachment - News article

- c: Jan Leshar, Pima County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
for Health and Community Services
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works and Economic
Development
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator for County Operations Administration