



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Ralph S. Northam
Governor

May 14, 2020

Dear Members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation:

As Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the health and safety of all Virginians is a priority, especially during this unprecedented pandemic. Those Virginians include employees, contractors, and detainees of federal facilities and the communities in which these facilities are located.

In order to protect the health of employees and the individuals being held at Farmville Detention Center and Caroline County Detention Center in Virginia, I am writing to urge the federal government to implement additional screening and testing for COVID-19. These are congregate settings where the virus, once introduced, could spread rapidly. In Virginia, my administration has been supporting point prevalence surveys (testing for all residents and staff) in our state correctional facilities, long-term care facilities, and other congregate settings. Increased testing will help to slow the spread by identifying those in the facility that need to be isolated and treated, and prevent it from getting out into the communities where the facility is located. The Virginia Department of Health would be happy to support these facilities with a point prevalence survey.

The State Health Commissioner has a limited right to enter any property, with the consent of the owner, and solely for the purpose of determining compliance with provisions of the law administered by the Virginia Department of Health, an order of the Board of Health or the Commissioner, or conditions in a license. These detention facilities are not licensed by the Commissioner or governed by any applicable law or order for which the Commissioner would be able to determine compliance, nor would the Commissioner have the authority to make the detention centers take any corrective action.

Therefore, I request that the Virginia Congressional Delegation urge the federal government to increase screening and testing for COVID-19 within these detention centers. Again, the Virginia Department of Health would be willing to support these efforts. Thank you for your service to our fellow Virginians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph S. Northam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ralph S. Northam

cc: Legal Aid Justice Center
Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights