

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION
AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY
COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
ASSISTANT WHIP - DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1302

ROBIN L. KELLY
2ND DISTRICT, ILLINOIS
2416 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-0773
DISTRICT OFFICES:
600 HOLIDAY PLAZA DRIVE
SUITE 505
MATTESON, IL 60443
(708) 679-0078
1000 EAST 111TH STREET, SUITE 5N
CHICAGO, IL 60628
(773) 321-2001
WEBSITE: WWW.ROBINKELLY.HOUSE.GOV

April 2, 2021

Sheriff Michael Downey
Kankakee County Sheriff's Office
3000 South Justice Way
Kankakee, Illinois 60901

Dear Sheriff Downey:

I write to inquire about how your department has coped with and handled concerns stemming from the Covid-19 epidemic as related to staff and detainees at Jerome Combs Detention Center.

From our previous communications, I understood that Combs, for the most part, avoided Covid-19 throughout much of the past year. However, in recent weeks I have learned from multiple sources of Covid-19 outbreaks in the jail, including a significant outbreak in the pod housing ICE detainees. As I recall from previous communications with your office, you were expecting to offer Covid-19 vaccinations in February to all inmates who requested one. I am curious if that happened. Could you please share with me in detail 1) the numbers of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Combs among all detainees, ICE detainees, and staff; and, 2) the numbers of detainees, ICE detainees, and staff who have been vaccinated. If vaccinations have not begun, when do you expect to start vaccinating staff and detainees?

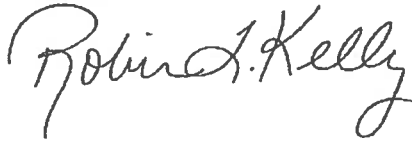
Additionally, I have received reports of other concerns regarding living conditions inside Combs. The concerns include the lack of mask-wearing and social distancing protocols, availability of masks, hand sanitizer and Covid-19 testing, and transparency in reporting Covid-19 cases to detainees. Other concerns have been raised about fungus and worms found inside the building, and a general lack of access to fresh air, sun light and recreational activities.

Covid-19 has created stress and complications in all walks of life, and I can only imagine those created in places such as detention centers. Please know that the newly enacted American Rescue Plan will provide badly needed resources to directly aid states and local governments which have been negatively impacted by Covid-19. I hope those resource will help address these concerns.

Page 2

I look forward to continuing to work together as we all address these unprecedented, complicated and difficult times. Thanks for your assistance and continued public service. If I can be of assistance to your department, or if you have any questions, please contact me or my senior adviser, Rick Bryant, at 708-679-0078.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin L. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

cc: Kankakee County Board Chairman Andrew Wheeler