

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2025

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General of the United States
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Kathleen Toomey
Associate Deputy Director
Federal Bureau of Prisons
320 First Street NW
Washington, DC 20534

Dear Attorney General Bondi and Associate Deputy Director Toomey,

We write to express our serious concern regarding the Bureau of Prison's decision to cut the retention pay of hardworking Bureau of Prisons (BOP) correctional officers (COs) and healthcare professionals and cancel all future BOP recruitment incentives. The decision to reduce or eliminate entirely the retention pay of over 23,000 BOP employees is dangerous and will cause our federal prison system to buckle under the weight of increasing numbers of incarcerated individuals and major staffing shortages. The brave correctional officers and healthcare professionals who show up to work each day play an integral part in ensuring the safety of employees, inmates, and our communities. We urge you to immediately reverse these destructive cuts taking effect on March 23rd.

BOP's decision to cut the retention pay of more than half of all COs in the United States will exacerbate existing staffing and safety concerns well understood by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Administration. In fact, staffing shortages across BOP locations became so detrimental to public safety that in 2023, the Comptroller General added the BOP to the U.S. Government Accountability Office's high-risk list for the first time. The Comptroller General pointed to BOP's "long-standing challenges with managing staff and resources, and planning and evaluating programs that help incarcerated people successfully return to the community" as a main reason for this decision.¹ Furthermore, on November 25, 2024, the Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General released a report on the performance and management challenges facing the Bureau of Prisons, finding that every BOP facility lacked sufficient staffing. According to this report, staffing shortages negatively impact staff morale and attentiveness, impair officers' ability to mitigate the risks of inmate deaths, and will increase inmate recidivism.²

¹ "Top Management and Performance Challenges Facing the Department of Justice–2024," U.S. Department of Justice Office of The Inspector General, November 25, 2024, <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/top-management-and-performance-challenges-facing-department-justice-2024>.

² "Top Management and Performance Challenges Facing the Department of Justice–2024."

To make matters worse, BOP does not have an acting director or an acting deputy director. In fact, since President Donald Trump took office, the Director of BOP was fired, the Acting Director who took her place subsequently resigned, and five other senior leaders resigned.³ The lack of leadership and oversight from senior leaders at the agency further proves these cuts are counter to the agency's stated mission. With some impacted correctional officers and healthcare professionals expecting to see a pay decrease of up to 25% of their current income, we are extremely alarmed by the lack of plan to address the increased staffing shortages these decisions will cause.⁴


By stripping COs and BOP healthcare professionals of their hard-earned retention pay, we will see an immediate drop in existing BOP staff. BOP's decision to simultaneously cancel recruitment initiatives will only make it more challenging for our correctional institutions to fill those empty positions. For example, according to the Local Union President, Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Mendota in California could expect to lose at least 10% of their staff following this decision.⁵ That means more officers forced to work overtime, more non-COs working at CO posts, decreased First Step Act programming, weakened Inmate Substance Use Disorder Treatments, higher risks of officer and inmate deaths, and skyrocketing recidivism rates.

We urge you to follow through on your commitment to keep correctional officers, inmates, and our communities safe, and rescind your catastrophic decision to cut retention pay and recruitment programs.

Sincerely,



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

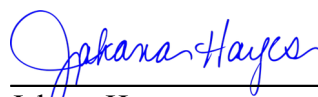
³ Walter Pavlo, "Bureau of Prisons Executives Announce Retirement Ahead of New Director," Forbes, February 17, 2025, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/walterpavlo/2025/02/17/bureau-of-prisons-executives-announce-retirement-ahead-of-new-director/>.

⁴ Sarah Roebuck, "BOP Slashes Retention Bonuses, Impacting Thousands of Correctional Officers," Corrections1, February 28, 2025, <https://www.corrections1.com/federal-prison/bop-slashes-retentionbonuses-cutting-pay-for-thousands-of-prison-staff>.

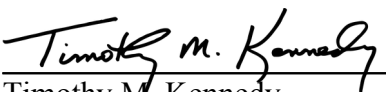
⁵ Roebuck, "BOP Slashes Retention Bonuses, Impacting Thousands of Correctional Officers," February 28, 2025.



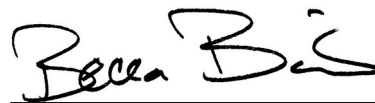
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



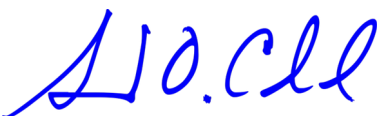
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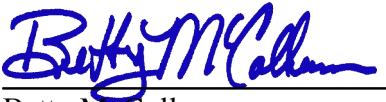
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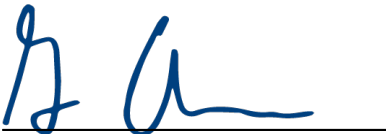
Don Bacon
Member of Congress



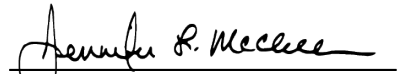
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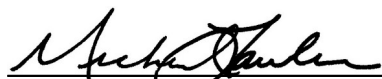
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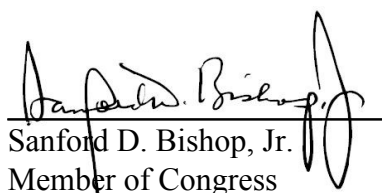
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