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STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

October 16, 2026

Commissioner Jon Murad
Vermont Department of Corrections
280 State Drive
Waterbury, VT 05671
jon.murad@vermont.gov

Dear Commissioner Murad:

Over the years, the Legislature has been alerted to staffing issues related to the State's correctional facilities, including Northern State and Southern State. We appreciate the Department's work to address these challenges, but it does not appear as though meaningful progress has been made. Working on ongoing planning for a new women's correctional facility does not take our focus away from staffing issues at all of our facilities.

Today, chronic understaffing and mandatory overtime remain serious concerns. The resulting fatigue and strain on officers and their families contribute to officers leaving the Department. When a facility is operating with half of the staff required, that increases the risk of harm to correctional officers and incarcerated individuals.

To support our oversight work and to prepare for the 2027 Legislative Session, please provide the following information:

1. Please provide two years of recruitment, retention, vacancy, turnover, and overtime information, including the probation and parole measures and staffing related to lockdowns and cancelled programming.

2. Please identify periods when VSEA–DOC side letter agreements were in effect, including explanation of any definitions, and explain any gaps in the available data.

3. Please provide each facility's daily schedules and actual staffing coverage, and explain the Department's definition of "available for work."

4. Please identify facility-specific staffing stabilization proposals including staffing targets, concrete steps, and timetables for reducing mandatory overtime, extended shifts, interrupted days off, and staffing-related lockdowns. Please also address whether qualified central office managers temporarily cover security shifts, in coordination with DOC and VSEA, and how progress will be measured and reported.

We will use this information to form the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee's recommendations regarding implementing such proposals to the respective standing committees in the 2027 Legislative Session. We also intend to recommend to the respective standing committees in the 2027 Legislative Session to seek independent analysis of staffing coverage, mandatory overtime, retention, and disruptions to services.

Please provide a response by October 30, identifying any information that may require additional time. Please ensure that the requested materials responsive to items #1-3 are received by November 6 and that the requested materials responsive to item #4 are received by December 4. Please send available information as it is completed rather than holding the entire response until those dates.

The requested materials responsive to items #1-3 to be submitted by November 6 will be an agenda item at the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee's November meeting. The requested materials responsive to item #4 to be submitted by December 4 will be an agenda item at the Committee's December meeting.

Thank you for your cooperation, Commissioner. We look forward to working with you on practical steps to stabilize staffing and improve safety throughout the correctional system.

Sincerely,

Rep. Alice Emmons

Representative Alice M. Emmons
Chair, House Committee on Corrections
Chair, Joint Legislative Justice
Oversight Committee

Virginia Lyons

Senator Virginia "Ginny" Lyons
Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
Vice-Chair, Joint Legislative Justice
Oversight Committee