

SWORN STATEMENT NO.56

FROM PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY JAIL

We do not have cell phone footage of abuses inside prisons and jails. I am reading the following sworn testimony from a person held in the Prince George's County Jail to lift this veil of secrecy and hold our justice system accountable.

I work as an Assistant Public Defender. Six of my clients are currently detained in the Prince George's County Detention Center awaiting trial.

The jail is an unsanitary place, with grimy doors and handles that are frequently touched, and stains on the ceilings and walls. The housing units have very poor circulation. In some, there are two or three dozen bunkbeds, set up in a tight grid with only a foot or two between beds.

My clients have constitutional rights to communicate with me. In response to the pandemic, the jail has severely limited my ability to communicate with my clients, even prohibiting me from speaking to certain clients entirely. One was not permitted to call me for the entire week that he was detained in an isolation cell awaiting his COVID-19 test results. One official at the jail even told me, untruthfully, that my client had been given access to a phone and simply did not want to call me.

Those I have spoken with have uniformly reported that the jail has failed to provide them with information about what COVID-19 is, how it spreads, and how detained people can protect themselves. The jail's policies have been focused on keeping detainees in the dark, rather than keeping them safe.

There currently are well-over a dozen COVID-positive people detained at the jail. There are also many, many more people who are symptomatic, who the jail has refused to test or isolate.

The jail has adopted a policy of illegally detaining people for no other reason than that they have tested positive for the Coronavirus.

The District Court has been slow to respond to this crisis. I have a client who is very medically vulnerable. He is currently detained because he cannot afford to pay a \$500 bond.

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My clients are afraid for their lives. They are afraid that they are going to be infected. They are afraid that they are going to be locked away indefinitely, without access to showers or telephones or fresh air, trapped in a room covered in blood, mucus, and feces. They are afraid that they will be denied medical attention.

They are afraid that they will die.