



FULTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Fulton County Sheriff's Office Partners with U.S. Department of Justice and Fulton County Board of Commissioners to Implement Comprehensive Jail Improvement Plan

Atlanta, GA – Today, the Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a complaint related to the civil rights investigation of the Fulton County Jail. We both anticipated and expected this filing to be a next step as we have been working closely with the DOJ and the Fulton County Attorney's Office regarding this matter. After extensive negotiations and pursuant to agreement of the parties, Sheriff Labat has agreed to enter into a consent order with the DOJ. The proposed consent order includes the development of a comprehensive plan addressing the proposed consent order that, with successful implementation, will meet DOJ requirements, improve operational efficiency, and ensure long-term sustainability.

As we have previously stated, the conditions highlighted in the report have been decades in the making and are well-known. Since taking office on January 1, 2021, Sheriff Labat has prioritized improving the jail's conditions. This commitment is evident through several proactive measures, including a September 2022 request for technical assistance from the DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance and National Institute of Corrections. In addition, in collaboration with our Fulton County justice partners, we reduced the inmate population by nearly 1,100, such that all individuals are assigned a bed, and no one is sleeping on portable sleeping devices on the floor. Other efforts include purchasing medical beds, updating and adding padded cells, continuous rehabilitation of housing units, repairing kitchen equipment, initiated staffing incentives to include signing bonuses, retention bonuses, double overtime and pay raises. While many of these efforts have been dismantled, we will continue to zealously advocate for every opportunity to support our staff and care for those in our custody.

In the proposed consent order, we have helped develop a plan that will enable us to address the DOJ's concerns if properly resourced. Some of these include:

Classification and Housing Plan:

To ensure appropriate inmate classification and housing assignments, the DOJ highlighted the need for a new Jail Management System (JMS) and upgraded technology. A new JMS will include advanced and modernized housing classification and risk assessment tools that we currently do not have. Accurate housing classification and additional protective custody units will help keep inmates safe. Also, inmates at imminent risk of suicide can be appropriately supervised.

Staffing Plan:

A comprehensive staffing analysis will empower us to optimize staff deployment and scheduling to meet operational demands. As our staffing levels and classification of inmates have changed, this is desperately needed. The previous staffing analysis was done ten years ago in 2015. By July 1, 2025, we will close the North Annex Jail Facility in Alpharetta and redirect those resources to increase staffing at other facilities. We are working with the local municipalities that use the North Annex Jail Facility to explore alternative staffing plans that better serve all Fulton County citizens.

Recruitment and Retention Plan:

A number of resources have been identified to help us attract, hire, and retain qualified staff. Hosting and attending career expos, executing a comprehensive mainstream media and social media recruitment campaign, streamlining the overall hiring process, increasing pay, retention bonuses, hiring bonuses, and a much-needed review of the current retirement plan are to name a few.

Perimeter and Contraband Plan:

Increased state of the art technology is vital to help prevent the introduction of contraband into the facility and to prevent and investigate any inmate violence or illegal activity. It is imperative that we reimplement previously defunded investigative and intelligence tools, tools that help keep both staff and inmates safe. Modernized and upgraded cameras and other surveillance equipment for both inside and outside the facility to include analytics, anti-drone technology, cell phone interdiction technology, additional fencing, and increased staffing will be essential to fulfill this requirement.

Housekeeping Plan and Pest Management System:

The implementation of a comprehensive safety and environmental sanitation plan is necessary. This must include expanding pest control services and implementing weekly clinical grade cleaning of housing areas. Upgraded secure storage for cleaning supplies and third party contracted cleaning professional are needed, as well as the hiring and retention of additional team members specifically for environmental sanitation. We will pursue partnership with the Center for Disease Control and other experts regarding ectoparasite remediation efforts and other environmental hazards.

Training Plan:

Advanced and external training is needed for staff as we will comprehensively review and update policies and procedures regarding use of force, protection from harm, as well as gang violence prevention for investigators. Additional technology will be utilized as training aids and for continuing education.

Physical Plant Plan:

It is imperative that we recognize that the physical plant and maintenance of the building are the responsibility and under the control of the Board of Commissioners (BOC). As the jail feasibility study, commissioned by the BOC highlighted, a new facility is needed. Despite the investment of \$2 million to complete the study and a vote to follow the study's recommendations, the Board of Commissioners reversed course and decided to move in another direction. While we recognize the Board's authority to make decisions about its facility, failure to modernize the building to include locks, additional onsite maintenance, and a complete retool of plumbing, undermines the goals of the proposed consent order. We look forward to working with the Board of Commissioners and Fulton County leadership as they work to maintain and completely modernize the facility, if modernization is at all possible.

Inmate Orientation Plan:

To provide newly booked inmates with information about how to report violence, sexual abuse, and unsafe conditions in the jail, free from retaliation, we will develop a routine communications plan to deliver the initial message and a way for them to access it during their stay. This will require video production and the use of technology through CCTV, housing kiosks, and inmate tablets.

“This consent order is a roadmap to a better future for our facility, staff, and the individuals entrusted to our care,” said Sheriff Patrick Labat. “Together, these opportunities will build meaningful and long-lasting change.”

We remain optimistic that these efforts will secure the necessary resources to address the proposed consent order, enhance recruitment and retention of staff, and provide increased training for our workforce. Ongoing collaboration and refinement of these strategies are essential to achieving compliance and long-lasting improvements. We are confident that our team is up for the challenge.

ABOUT THE FULTON COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE: The mission of the Fulton County Sheriff’s Office is Service; through laser-focused efforts to protect the citizens of Fulton County with coordinated law enforcement operations, special strategic teams, and community outreach methods. The Sheriff’s Office is constitutionally responsible for the security of all courtrooms, executing arrest warrants, and serving civil papers. In addition, the Sheriff’s Office is responsible for the administration and operation of the Fulton County Jail.

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