



Oklahoma Public Employees Association

Working For You!

September 3, 2020

The Honorable J. Kevin Stitt
Governor of the State of Oklahoma
2300 N. Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73111

Dear Governor Stitt,

On behalf of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association (OPEA) members working in correctional facilities across Oklahoma, we request a temporary \$2.00 per hour increase in pay for all employees working in the state's Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities effective September 1, 2020, and continuing until at least December 31, 2020. Due to COVID-19 outbreaks and the likelihood of more spread in the facilities, OPEA members believe the pay increase is a necessary and appropriate use of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding made available to Oklahoma to combat COVID and its effects on our citizens.

A time-limited pay increase was enacted for some facility employees earlier this year. However, it excluded some facility jobs that are at as much risk of infection as those job categories that were approved. The previous increase has expired, but it needs to be expanded and reinstated.

Since the beginning of the outbreak, more than 1,350 offenders have tested positive and more than 150 DOC employees have reported a positive COVID-19 test.

In the best of times, working inside a correctional facility is difficult and dangerous. Oklahoma is fortunate to have citizens willing to perform those difficult tasks. However, as COVID infects more staff and offenders, the job becomes substantially more dangerous. Prior to COVID, DOC had difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. During this pandemic, maintaining adequate staffing becomes exponentially more difficult.

Inadequate staffing in Oklahoma's correctional facilities creates an undue burden on existing staff, inmates, and, ultimately, the public. Citizens rely on DOC employees to keep our communities safe. Using CARES Act funding for additional pay for all DOC facility staff is necessary to protect our citizens and all those who serve behind the wire.

I am available to discuss this with you at your convenience and can be reached at (405) 201 1373.

Sincerely,



Sterling Zearley, Executive Director
Oklahoma Public Employees Association

"OPEA unites public employees in Oklahoma to improve the quality of state employment."