

Senator J.D. Ford
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(317) 232-9847
s29@iga.in.gov

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March 28, 2020

The Honorable Eric J. Holcomb
Indiana Statehouse

Dear Governor Holcomb:

On behalf of Senate District 29, I'd like to thank you for all you are doing to keep our fellow Hoosiers safe during these unprecedented times. Also, I'd like to express my sincere thanks for vetoing SEA 148. With that being said, I do have some questions that I would like to ask as we look to the days and weeks ahead.

I have been dutifully watching your press conferences and reporting back to my constituents via social media. In the past days, I have watched the press conferences on 3/26 and 3/27 where the press corps specifically asked about the bed capacity and the number of ventilators available in our state. During the briefing on 3/27, you stated you cannot release these numbers due to "contract" issues. However, I believe Hoosiers deserve and need to know these numbers. Additionally, I have learned that Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests made by a media outlet were "closed out" and no information was given. Again, I assert and believe that we have a right to know these numbers no matter how grim they may be. I know other states are releasing this information. Therefore, I respectfully ask the following:

- 1.) How many ICU beds do we have? When the peak hits, how many beds will we need to have? What is the State doing to procure these beds?
- 2.) Dr. Box mentioned that the peak will arrive mid-April so we have some time to prepare. Will the National Guard or the Army Corp of Engineers construct makeshift hospitals so that we aren't having to do this while we are in the peak?
- 3.) How many ventilators do we have? When the peak hits, how many ventilators will we need to have? What is the State doing to procure these ventilators?
- 4.) As you may know, a large number of healthcare professionals reside in district 29. In past press conferences, it has been shared that healthcare workers are being asked to reuse their PPE, specifically masks. However, many healthcare workers have shared with me that they believe this is actually doing more harm. Some are having to Lysol their masks, use isopropyl alcohol, or even sterilize using ultraviolet light in order to reuse them. All of these practices reduce the integrity of the masks.

5.) Will there be "COVID-19 only" hospitals in Indiana?

You and Dr. Box have both seen the numbers. Respectfully, the numbers should be released so we know and can plan for any shortfalls accordingly. Without doing so, we are allowing others to write this narrative. Furthermore, by not sharing these numbers, Hoosiers cannot see the severity of this situation despite the many calls for Hoosiers to stay-at-home.

Now, I'd like to shift gears and ask specific questions regarding the Department of Corrections. On, 3/11/20, I asked the DOC to provide their COVID-19 response plan, which I want to thank the Department for providing to me. However, upon reviewing the plan, I noticed the plan is more reactive in nature and closed visitation to the DOC facilities. Then, at the 3/27/20 press conference, Commissioner Carter mentioned offenders will be making the PPE. I am sure this is a source of pride for these offenders to help out during these uncertain times. However, I think since they are helping us, we should help them. Also noted in the press conference, Commissioner Carter said no offender has COVID-19, however, at an early press conference at the beginning of the week; it was stated that offenders were not going to be tested. For clarification, I have some questions:

- 1.) How many DOC offenders have been tested?
- 2.) Commissioner Carter said no offender is positive for COVID-19. Is this still accurate by the date of this letter?
- 3.) How many DOC staff members have been tested? Have any tested positive?
- 4.) If an offender contracts COVID-19, what is the plan for treatment, testing of other offenders and isolating other offenders to slow the spread inside the facility.
- 5.) At the 3/27 press conference, you stated that no consideration is being given to release any offenders. I respectfully request the DOC do a full review of all offenders, who are non-violent, and with less than 6 months left in their sentence-be released. As we have seen from other instances, in confined spaces like a prison or even like a nursing home facility, COVID-19 can spread rapidly. I'm concerned for these Hoosiers who are incarcerated with no other place to go.

Governor Holcomb, thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I am happy to discuss any, part or all of these questions. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,



J.D. Ford
Indiana State Senator
District 29

CC: Commissioner Carter, Indiana Department of Corrections