



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
United States Parole Commission**

Office of the Chairman

*90 K Street, N.E. 3rd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20530
Telephone: 202-346-7000
Facsimile: 202-357-1084*

April 28, 2020

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress
2136 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Norton:

This letter is to respond to concerns you raised in your letter to me dated April 21, 2020. I hope that you and your hard-working staff are doing well during this time of crisis.

First of all, I appreciate your recognition of the efforts the Commission has already made to modify its practices in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. As you have alluded to, in light of the pandemic, on March 19, I issued guidance to limit the number of jail admissions on new warrants and to release those awaiting hearings. In addition, the Commission ordered the release of all prisoners who were in custody at the Correctional Treatment Facility receiving substance abuse programming via the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program. Since that time, the population under the Commission's jurisdiction at the Central Detention and Correctional Treatment Facilities has been reduced by 46%.

You raise concerns about persons who were sentenced by the Commission prior to the guidance that I issued on March 19. You have our assurance that the Commission's review of cases under its jurisdiction during that time remains ongoing. You also stressed the need to reduce the number of warrants being issued while looking at immediate releases. We agree with the necessity of that two-pronged approach. The Commission initially focused on those returned to custody on alleged violations and those awaiting hearings. As you urge, we have begun to focus on those already serving sentences. We have begun releasing parole violators in the custody of both the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the DC Department of Corrections who the Commission had approved for an earlier release. I have directed the Commission staff to continue to identify low risk offenders at all stages in the revocation process and consider them for possible earlier release. In doing so, the Commission will continue to make reasoned decisions in each case weighing the health risk caused by the virus while still protecting public safety.

As you have suggested, the Commission has worked with its partner agencies, most notably the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) to ensure that they are advised in advance when a person is being returned to supervision earlier than expected. We also have been adding special conditions to facilitate an earlier return to the community. The use of home confinement and global positioning aids in that process.

I appreciate that you reached out to me directly on these issues. As you know, I am always available to discuss matters that impact the population of the District of Columbia. When some of the current social distancing restrictions are lifted, I would be glad to meet with you again to discuss the Commission and the District of Columbia residents under its jurisdiction. In the meantime, I hope that you and your family stay healthy and well. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Patricia Cushwa
Acting Chairman
U.S. Parole Commission