



Margaret Mims  
Sheriff  
Fresno County Sheriff's Office

March 2, 2021

Board of State and Community Corrections  
2590 Venture Oaks Way, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95833

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to address concerns over the Fresno County Jail's reporting of inmate COVID-19 data to the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). Over the past weeks, inmate advocate groups have been speaking out during the BSCC public comment forums, about their belief that the Fresno County Jail is incorrectly reporting COVID-19 statistics to the BSCC. Their beliefs stem from a discrepancy between the COVID numbers reported to the BSCC and the total number of positive COVID test results, which were reported in a New York Times article.

In July of 2020, the BSCC began weekly reporting requirements for county jails. The Fresno County Sheriff's Office has reported accurately inmate COVID statistics to include; total inmates tested, total confirmed positive tests, COVID hospitalizations, resolved COVID cases, and COVID related inmate deaths. These statistics have been kept by our jail medical provider (Wellpath Inc.).

The Fresno Sheriff's Office began collecting COVID data with our first known positive inmate case on March 3, 2020. As was mentioned above, reporting of COVID data to the BSCC began in July of 2020, and did not include retroactive data to the beginning of the pandemic. The discrepancy arose when data published in a New York Times article did not match data reported to the BSCC. Specifically, the New York Times article published data of all COVID positive results, which included COVID positive tests of inmates who had previously tested positive.

During the beginning stages of the pandemic, once an inmate tested positive for COVID-19, the inmate was placed into quarantine housing. Inmates remained in quarantine housing until they had a subsequent negative COVID test. This resulted in inmates testing positive for a second and third time, causing an inflated number of reported positive results. It was relatively unknown at the time, that once positive, an inmate may continue to test positive for months, while no longer being contagious.

*Dedicated to Protect & Serve*

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Retesting of COVID positive inmates is no longer recommended by the Centers for Disease Control or the Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH).

The data reported to the New York Times was the total number of COVID positive results (3814), which was reported as the total number of positive cases in the Fresno County Jail. From March 3, 2020 to March 1, 2021, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office has had a total of 1365 inmates test positive for COVID-19. This number does not include any previous or subsequent positive results for the same inmate.

The Fresno Sheriff's Office is dedicated to ensuring transparency in its reporting of all inmate COVID data throughout this pandemic. Due to the on-going challenges of COVID-19, along with the ever changing recommendations for the testing and reporting of positive results, some minor discrepancies may arise in data reported versus data requested. In a meeting on Monday March 1, 2021, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office confirmed the accuracy of our data that we have been reporting to the BSCC.

The Fresno Sheriff's Office is working with its jail medical provider (Wellpath) in an effort to continually test all inmates who wish to be tested on a weekly basis and in booking during the intake process. Beginning early in the pandemic, we supplied masks to all inmates upon arrival in booking and have supplied additional masks to inmates weekly or when requested. We also began health screening, which included taking temperatures of all employees and vendors entering jail facilities. The jail has also taken extraordinary steps to ensure the cleanliness and safety of the jail facilities for the inmates and staff. We provide weekly testing opportunities for employees, and hundreds of these tests have been administered.

The Fresno County Sheriff's Office is dedicated to excellence in the delivery of medical and mental health services to the inmates of the Fresno County Jail. In the most recent development, in partnership with the FCDPH, the jail has also began providing COVID vaccinations to inmates in accordance with state distribution guidelines.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions and/or concerns regarding COVID-19 testing and reporting data in the Fresno County Jail. I can be reached at 559-600-8800 or via email at [margaret.mims@fresnosheriff.org](mailto:margaret.mims@fresnosheriff.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Mims". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margaret Mims  
Sheriff-Coroner-Public Administrator