



STATE OF ARKANSAS
SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS
GOVERNOR

December 21, 2023

Benny Magness, Chairman
Arkansas Board of Corrections
P.O. Box 20550
White Hall, Arkansas 71612-0550

Mr. Magness,

I am in receipt of your letter requesting that 138 National Guardsman be deployed to work full-time in the prisons. Your letter is yet another example of the desire to play political games, and this time you are involving our brave National guardsmen and women as pawns. Secretary Profiri had a plan to safely reopen beds with no additional personnel needed. If the Board wants to reactivate beds, then they should reinstate the Secretary and implement his plan without delay. I will not inject our guardsmen and women into a purely political situation caused by the very person requesting them.

You suspended Secretary Profiri and filed frivolous litigation against the State, resulting in great expense to our taxpayers, all in an effort to maintain the "status quo." The status quo in Arkansas is exactly what placed us in this situation.

It is obvious from a review of the historical data that you are more interested in engaging in these public political stunts than you are in doing your actual job. Under Secretary Profiri's leadership, real progress was being effected in the Arkansas Department of Corrections. Progress that was long overdue, due to this Board's lack of action. And now, that progress has been stifled by the actions of the Board, under your guidance. It is clear to me, and to the people of Arkansas, that you are not interested in fulfilling the stated purpose of the Board. Criminals are not being held accountable for their actions, victim needs are not being addressed positively, and the safety of society is being ignored. That is why I signed the Protect Act, to which you testified against, into law.

With that in mind, it is at this time that I must call for your immediate resignation. It is

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clear that the Board of Corrections is incapable of rational, reasonable, or fiscally responsible decision making under your leadership. Much as it has been over the past two decades, you believe that you are the sole member of the board. Your letters, actions, and commands issued at the department, which lack prior board approval or a public board vote, make that glaringly obvious. You refuse to abide by the law or operate in the public eye, engaging in conduct that does not constitute an official action of the Board. After 27 years, it is time for you to stand out of the way of progress and let someone actually focused on the safety of Arkansans take your place on the board. Someone who shares an actual concern for the situation in which we find ourselves, rather than someone who cares only about his own power.

Since Secretary Profiri took office, vacancy rates have seen a reduction of over twenty (20) percent. The Board approved nearly 300 beds at the Tucker Unit this past April. The vacancy rate at that time was higher than the current vacancy rate at Tucker Max. Those bed reactivations have proven successful despite the vacancy rate. Under Secretary Profiri's guidance, vacancy rates are the lowest they have been in recent years.

At the December meeting, Secretary Profiri outlined his plan of action. He met with each warden, as well as Director Payne, to discuss bedspace and staffing capabilities. All parties agreed that the additions would not impact operations or protocols. You were advised of the same. If the Board of Corrections is truly concerned about the safety of those involved in the prison system, the safety of the public at large, and the safety of our military personnel, you will immediately put Secretary Profiri back to work to fulfill his plan for staffing the prison systems. Mr. Chairman it is time to put the safety of Arkansans first and step aside.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor