

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 20, 2020

George C. Zoley  
Chief Executive Officer  
The GEO Group, Inc.  
Suite 700  
621 NW 53rd Street  
Boca Raton, FL 33487

Dear Mr. Zoley:

On March 9, 2020, we wrote to you requesting information about GEO Group's (GEO's) plans to prevent and manage an outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in its facilities and protect the health and safety of incarcerated individuals, correctional staff, and their families.<sup>1</sup> On March 12, 2020, GEO replied with a letter that failed to seriously address any of our questions and redirected all requests for information to the BOP.<sup>2</sup> We are disturbed by GEO's refusal to provide critical information necessary to assess the steps it is taking in response to this crisis. In light of the ongoing public health emergency—and the recent reports of infections among incarcerated individuals and correctional staff at a GEO facility—we are following up on our letter to request that you immediately respond to the questions from our March 9, 2020 letter.

The COVID-19 outbreak has become significantly more dire over the last week, with confirmed cases in the United States alone increasing ten-fold. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.<sup>3</sup> As of March 20, 2020, there are over 14,250 confirmed cases and 205 deaths from COVID-19 in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> In response to this emergency, states around the country have taken drastic measures to reduce risk and “flatten the curve” of the outbreak.<sup>5</sup> Forty-eight states have declared states of emergency, and in order to encourage social distancing, many have ordered the closure of schools, restaurants, bars, and other places

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<sup>1</sup> Senator Elizabeth Warren et. al., “Letter to Federal Bureau of Prisons Regarding Coronavirus,” March 9, 2020, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2020-03-09%20Senator%20Warren%20Letter%20to%20BOP%20re%20Coronavirus.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> GEO Group Inc., “Response Letter to Senator Elizabeth Warren et. al. Regarding Coronavirus,” March 12, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, “WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020,” <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>.

<sup>4</sup> Johns Hopkins University - Center for Systems Science and Engineering, “Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases by Johns Hopkins CSSE,” March 17, 2020, <https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

<sup>5</sup> The New York Times, “Flattening the Coronavirus Curve,” Siobhan Roberts, March 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/science/coronavirus-curve-mitigation-infection.html>.

people congregate.<sup>6</sup> Earlier this week, the White House advised all Americans to avoid gatherings of 10 or more people.<sup>7</sup>

The more than 175,000 people in the U.S. who are currently incarcerated in federal prisons and jails, and federal correctional staff and their families, are at especially high-risk of infection if an outbreak occurs in their facility, and would be particularly challenging to treat if infected with COVID-19.<sup>8</sup>

This is a real threat. Two staff members at federal prisons in New Hampshire and Texas have already tested positive for COVID-19.<sup>9</sup> And on Friday, just days after our letter to you, GEO reported that 34 incarcerated individuals and staff at the GEO-managed George W. Hill Correctional Facility in Thornton, Pennsylvania were quarantined after an employee tested positive for COVID-19.<sup>10</sup> Despite this important development, GEO has not publicly released its plan to protect against the threat of a COVID-19 outbreak.

We respectfully request a prompt response from GEO that provides thorough and complete answers to the questions outlined in our March 9, 2020 letter, no later than March 25, 2020.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

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<sup>6</sup> Business Insider, “Almost all US states have declared states of emergency to fight coronavirus — here’s what it means for them,” Cranley and Sarah Al-Arshani, March 18, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/california-washington-state-of-emergency-coronavirus-what-it-means-2020-3>; The Hill, “At least 20 states order partial closures of restaurants, bars amid coronavirus,” Justine Coleman, March 17, 2020, <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/public-global-health/487974-at-least-20-states-order-partial-closure-restaurants>.

<sup>7</sup> The White House, “The President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America,” March 16, 2020, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20\\_coronavirus-guidance\\_8.5x11\\_315PM.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons, “Statistics,” [https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/population\\_statistics.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/population_statistics.jsp); “Achieving A Fair and Effective COVID-19 Response: An Open Letter to Vice-President Mike Pence, and Other Federal, State, and Local Leaders from Public Health and Legal Experts in the United States,” March 2, 2020, [https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/ghjp/documents/final\\_covid-19\\_letter\\_from\\_public\\_health\\_and\\_legal\\_experts.pdf](https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/center/ghjp/documents/final_covid-19_letter_from_public_health_and_legal_experts.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Forbes, “First Cases Of Coronavirus In Federal Prisons Confirmed, As Two Staffers Test Positive,” Matt Perez, March 18, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattperetz/2020/03/18/first-cases-of-coronavirus-in-federal-prisons-confirmed-as-two-staffers-test-positive/#3238bed4a7d5>.

<sup>10</sup> CBS3 Philadelphia, “Coronavirus Update: 34 George W. Hill Correctional Facility Employees, Inmates Being Self-Quarantined After Employee Tests Positive For COVID-19,” March 14, 2020, <https://philadelphia.cbslocal.com/2020/03/14/george-w-hill-correctional-facility-employee-tests-positive-for-covid-19/?utm=newsbreak>.

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