



PAUL DEWOLFE
PUBLIC DEFENDER

BECKY FELDMAN
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

Public Defender Applauds Governor for Requiring Universal Testing at Maryland's State Run Correctional and Juvenile Facilities.

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Contact: Melissa Rothstein, Melissa.rothstein@maryland.gov or 718-873-4036

The Office of the Public Defender applauds the Governor for [directing the universal testing for COVID-19 at facilities run by the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services \(DPSCS\) and Department of Juvenile Services \(DJS\)](#).

“Particularly as counties within the state start to reopen, stemming the COVID-19 pandemic in correctional and juvenile facilities is an urgent public health concern and universal testing is an important measure— along with population reduction, preventative efforts, and treatment access — to minimizing transmissions and reducing the fatality rate,” said Paul DeWolfe, Maryland Public Defender. “We are hopeful that testing information will be used for improved decision-making regarding housing, staffing, and health care needs; increased access to treatment for those who need it; and reduced reliance on isolation for those who do not pose a health risk.”

[OPD had issued a letter earlier this week demanding universal testing at DJS facilities, in response to an outbreak at a private youth facility](#). Increased confirmed cases and fatalities in adult facilities have raised similar concerns.

“Similar to nursing homes, correctional and juvenile facilities pose exceptionally high risks of COVID-19 transmission and our clients housed in these facilities disproportionately meet the heightened vulnerability criteria identified by the CDC and other public health entities,” said DeWolfe. “Hopefully, local corrections departments will follow the state’s lead to conduct universal testing among their jail population and use that information to protect the health and safety of the people incarcerated, the facility staff, and the surrounding community.”

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