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April 3, 2019

Director Freddie Pough
South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice
PO Box 21069
Columbia, South Carolina 29221-1069

Dear Mr. Pough:

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention concerns recently received by the House Legislative Oversight Committee about the safety and welfare of juveniles and employees at the Broad River Road Complex (BBRC). While unsubstantiated, nevertheless, these are serious allegations about potential impacts attendant to staffing at the facility.

With regards to the safety of juveniles and employees, it is specifically alleged that "[o]fficers anticipate another major incident when juveniles take over the facility again; and essentially with no officers, it will be worst (sic) then (sic) the previous incident. . . ." Enclosed for your review is a copy of the correspondence. Thank you for your consideration and review of the various allegations contained in the enclosed correspondence. Any response you may have to these allegations, devoid of any information that may pose a security risk for juveniles and employees, is welcome.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "WJN", written over a horizontal line.

Wm. Weston J. Newton

Enclosure

cc: Governor Henry McMaster
House Legislative Oversight Committee

Weston Newton

From: ddrobe@scdjj.net
Sent: Tuesday, April 02, 2019 1:15 PM
Subject: SCDJJ Agency Employee and Juvenile Relation Concerns ~ Website email from David Roberts

The attached letter (written by me) was sent to Director Freddie B. Pough and other executive team members on February 24th 2019 addressing the short comings of the executive management of the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice To: Freddie B. Pough, Director and Executive Management Team Subject: Agency Employee Relations From: BRRC Security Officers Through: Captain David D. Roberts I would like to express the following concerns as it relates to the treatment of security officers at BRRC and its mismanagement. The security morale is none existing due to the descending atmosphere that has been created by the decisions made by our executive leaders both past and present. BRRC has been short staff for the last couple of years and the agencies inability to obtain any type of structure and consistency is the reason. In only a few years SCDJJ has went from working 8 hours shifts, then to 12 hour shifts, then back to 8 hours, and now working 12 hours again. During this time security personnel have resigned for several reason which include; working 8 hour and 12 hour shifts within the same week without appropriate notice, not being able to be relieved from duty in a timely manner due to there being no relief/coverage, juveniles being out of control and disorderly. Collectively officers have struggled balancing their lives due to the insufficiency of the work force. Single parent income households have lost child care due to the inability to be relieved from duty in a timely manner. In addition to this, due to the agency not paying adequate wages, security personnel have to obtain second jobs to take care of their homes and loved ones but this effects their ability to maintain their additional source of income. Not having proper relief takes away from family time and even the officers ability to be productive the following work day; this is lengthen when the commute to work is factored in. SCDJJ is very disrespectful as it relates to their employees time. All this has taking place prior to and after the executive ordered that restricted the pay out of overtime compensation and officers now earn comp time. The productively immediately diminished because of this order and officers would not voluntarily come in to assist with coverage essentially for free; this is when the officers looked for secondary jobs. Officers have also resigned consistently almost weekly since this new order. Officers were volunteering to assist with visitation on the weekends they were off because we were barely making coverage. Now those officers are no longer assisting with visitation, breaches of security are normal practice to execute visitation. It is common practice for one unit or more to put all the juveniles in the multipurpose room and send one of the staff to visitation. Visitation is being ran with 3 or 4 officers and at minimum it should be ran with at least twice that. One officer is transporting and strip searching, one is passing out snacks and watching the visits, and one officer is watching visits and working the back phone. Depending on whether these officers are male or female, the officer who is issuing snacks and games is left by themselves watching visits while the other officers is strip searching. In just about every scenario, these officers are supervisors; which there is no one available to respond if assistance is called on open campus. The new prototype units mandate at minimum of 5 officers to relieve officers for breaks from the pods, to pass out juvenile meals, conduct meds, and etc. We have been running these units with only 4 officers which is one on each post without a relief factor at all; these officers include Captains, Lieutenants, Sergeants, Corporals and Juvenile Correctional Officers. Because this is campus wide, there are times when there is only one free supervisor to assist and respond to assistance calls from all 7 units at BRRC; this task is impossible even with even if two supervisors are free especially if they are already involved in another unit assisting with a multitude of tasks that are needed for normal daily operations. There are also times when one officer is placed in an area with two different pods of juveniles because there isn't enough officers to meet coverage needs; this violates the officer to juvenile ratio which is 8 to 1 per policy. This means that a building designed to operate with 5 officers is running with 3 officers. Pods are now being closed due to not having enough officers to operate every pod; the juveniles that are from the pod that is closed are combined between the two pods if the count is low enough. Many of these juveniles do not need to be house together due to different behavioral issues

displayed. Coverage is also effected the juveniles from going to the cafeteria to eat hot meals; all juveniles eat every meal in the dorm. Recreation for the juveniles has been canceled because coverage is down. There are instances when the nurse comes to the unit for meds, the juveniles have to be sent out to the nurse without an officer because there is no one available to conduct meds; on occasions an officer has to leave a pod unattended to execute meds, pass out meals, and even simply to use the bathroom. The housing units at BRRC all have a mandated amount of officers in order for it to operate safely and without breaching security; this has not happened for several months due to the lack of coverage. In conjunction with the issues coverage presents, the juveniles are not responding to the consequences for negative behavior and the executive managers continue to apply a system that does not work. The juvenile aggression has risen and because there is nothing in place that works to deter acts of aggression, their negative behavior excels. There are also several officers out on workmenâ€™s comp for being injured while on duty; some of which are assaults. In some cases, juveniles are charged and sent to Alvin S Glen but in most cases, the charges are dropped and the juvenile returns to the facility; and the officer who is injured is still out of work. The agency ultimately doesnâ€™t have anything in place to deter juveniles from assault officers either. In reverse the agency will be swift to terminate an officer and the reality is that the executive managers could care less what happens because they are safe in their offices and homes. Officers anticipate another major incident when the juveniles take over the facility again; and essentially with no officers, it will be worst then the previous incident when juveniles obtained car keys and were driving officerâ€™s personal cars on the complex, trying to hit responding officers who were on foot. I was told by the previous BRRC FA (Elwood Sessions) that Poplar was specifically indicated for abusing overtime. It has also been reported that the executive management team has stated that due to the amount of overtime that was being paid, it was a reflection officers stealing. Since being a Captain, I have never been fully staff. I have completed and submitted a multitude of schedules with shifts or particular day/days with one, two, or three officers scheduled. Not because officers called out, or were on leave, but because the positions are vacant. Officers are then made to stay over working 16 hour shifts every weekend because there is no relief. In spite of being told by the FA (E. Sessions) to let the officers work 16 hour shifts, to ensure my officers were able to go home, I combine the day and night shifts that only had two officers total and they worked 12 hour shift to ensure they could have a relief factor and we would have coverage the next day. Officers have consistently broken their backs for their coworkers, supervisors, and specifically the agency. Since being on 12 hour shifts, coverage has not gotten better but worst. The decision to return to 12 hours shift came entirely too late. Many had already quit because they didnâ€™t know when they were going to be relieved, regardless of what was on the schedule. Almost no new officers stay because we do not have an environment suitable to train them in. They are coming in immediately getting burnt out working 13 and 14 hours their first day on their assigned shift. As veterans and supervisors, we are doing everything we can to retain officers but that is not enough. SCDJJ is not even in competition with other law enforcement entities for new employees, we are in competition with fast food restaurants. The agency has promised pay increases for security week after week and month after month but none ever arrive. All we see is money being taking away from security at every opportunity; yet executive management continue to get pay increases. The restriction of overtime compensation and just recently the educational pay increase was drastically decreased as well. As short as we are already, the executive managers are consistently pushing to make officers to take off comp days; and then officer is called back into work because we donâ€™t have enough officers to manage the facility. Officers are already not getting paid for their work overages and now they are being made to taking comp days that they have earned. BRRC is consistently compared to other SCDJJ facilities are only essentially one building when BRRC has a total 7 juvenile housing units and Birchwood High school. The needs of this particular facility are unique and doesnâ€™t compare solely due to the amount of movement and vast area that has to be covered in order to reach them and just general movement. It appears that the budget doesnâ€™t account how many officers the facility needs to operate safely and without security breaches. Our observations have shown us that saving money is more important than operating a secure facility and officers are disgusted with how the facility is being managed.

David Roberts

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