



PRISON LAW OFFICE

General Delivery, San Quentin, CA 94964
Telephone (510) 280-2621 • Fax (510) 280-2704
www.prisonlaw.com

Executive Director:
Margot Mendelson

Attorneys:
Rana Anabtawi
Patrick Booth
Tess Borden
Steven Fama
Daniel Greenfield
Mackenzie Halter
Alison Hardy
Sophie Hart
Lily Harvey
Jacob Hutt
A.D. Lewis
Rita Lomio
Heather MacKay
Donald Specter
Jerrod Thompson

VIA EMAIL

Sheriff Jim Cooper
Sacramento County
jcooper@sacsheriff.com

August 19, 2024

Dear Sheriff Cooper,

As you know, there has been a wave of deaths in the Sacramento County Jails in recent months. In the past three months, five people have died in the custody of the Sacramento Sheriff's Office (SSO). As class counsel in the *Mays v. Sacramento* lawsuit, we are gravely concerned about these deaths. For years, we have raised concerns about the custody culture of the Sacramento Sheriff's Office. Having reviewed the surveillance and body-worn camera footage of several recent deaths, we write to again express our deep concern about the SSO's failure to respond with humanity and decency to people in need. Below, we describe the tragic death of one man who died in the booking loop of Sacramento County's Main Jail in May 2024 and the way in which it reflects our broader and long-standing concerns.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Board of Directors

Jason Bell • Chesa Boudin • Vanita Gaonkar • Nick Gregoratos • Christianne Hipps
Jean Lu • Claire McDonnell • Seth Morris • Keramet Reiter • Vishal Shah • Adrienne Yandell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

This callousness on the part of the Sacramento Sheriff's Office is consistent with our reporting over the years. We and the court-appointed experts have reported for years about these profound cultural problems. It is commonplace in the jails for custody staff to ignore people in crisis who press the emergency buttons in their cells begging for help. The medical experts [recently reported](#) about a man whose face was swollen to the point that his right eye was completely closed requesting assistance from a deputy. The deputy told him that he did not have an emergency and to stop bothering staff.

Last month, we wrote to the SSO about a person with acute mental illness who had been housed on the most restrictive floor of the jail. When we visited the jail, numerous people told us that this person had been screaming at all hours of the day and night, refusing meals, and urinating on the floor of his cell. People told us that deputies' response to his decompensation was simply to place a towel down outside of his cell so that his urine did not leak out of his cell.

The recent deaths in the jails are a symptom of a larger and long-standing cultural problem with the Sacramento Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff must take accountability for the apathy and callousness that pervades the jail and exercise leadership to make immediate changes. Sacramento County should demand decency for the people it incarcerates.

Sincerely,

Patrick Booth
Margot Mendelson
Prison Law Office

Aaron Fischer
Law Office of Aaron J. Fischer

cc: Sarah Britton, County Counsel
Eric Jones, Deputy County Executive
Mays Court-Appointed Subject Matter Experts