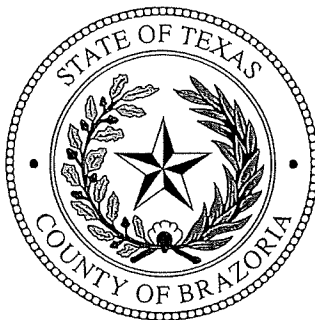


L.M. "Matt" Sebesta, Jr.
County Judge



Cathy Hughes
Chief of Staff

BRAZORIA COUNTY

April 17, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of the State of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Governor Abbott:

I want to thank you for your leadership and tireless efforts to protect all Texans during this public health emergency. Brazoria County public officials and Brazoria County residents recognize that we must all help one another and do our fair share during this unprecedented public health emergency. Therefore, it is with shock, surprise and disappointment that I send this letter to apprise you of the reckless actions of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) which have endangered the lives of the residents of Brazoria County and increased their risk of exposure to Covid-19.

Recently, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) surreptitiously transferred at least 121 Covid-19 positive inmates from TDCJ units outside of Brazoria County to two TDCJ units in Brazoria County without any prior notice to Speaker Dennis Bonnen, Senator Larry Taylor, Senator Joan Huffman, State Representative Ed Thompson, my office, or county officials responsible for the safety of our residents. The 121 inmates transferred to Brazoria County represent approximately 37% of the 326 inmates who tested positive for Covid-19 being transferred to just one county. We in Brazoria County recognize as citizens we all have a duty to help and are willing to assist TDCJ with a fair apportionment of these cases throughout our state. Instead, TDCJ has inundated Brazoria County with a disproportionate share of its Covid-19 cases and caused a disproportionate exposure to Covid-19 for TDCJ employees and their families who are residents of Brazoria County, first responders in Brazoria County and other residents of Brazoria County.

TDCJ's irresponsible actions have significantly impacted our county resources and our citizenry during this emergency, all without any notice to our emergency departments or first responders who we have a duty by law to notify. This is not the fault of an inmate or inmates. It is however, the responsibility of the leadership of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Brazoria County currently has 290 confirmed cases of Covid-19 with 3 deaths. Our county has a limited amount of hospital beds, hospital resources and personal protective equipment.

As a result of the foregoing, in order to continue to protect the citizens of Brazoria County, I am requesting additional personal protective equipment from the state and reimbursement from the state for any expenses incurred by Brazoria County in responding to additional duties at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. I am also requesting that TDCJ reapportion in a fair manner its Covid-19 cases. Respectfully, Mr. Governor, I am requesting that you consider an Executive Order requiring TDCJ in the future to notify elected state officials and county officials in writing in advance of any transfer of Covid-19 positive inmates to that county so that those elected state officials and county officials may make proper preparations for the protection of all concerned.

The citizens of Brazoria County deserve better from our state partners, and deserve a written apology from the executive director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for the manner in which this was handled as it was inconsistent with good emergency management practice and procedures and completely dismissive regarding the health of Brazoria County residents.

Sincerely,



L. M. "Matt" Sebesta, Jr.

cc: Lt. Governor Dan Patrick
Speaker Dennis Bonnen
Senator Larry Taylor
Senator Joan Huffman
Representative Ed Thompson