

April 30, 2018

VIA FAX AND CERTIFIED MAIL

Re: Public Records Request

Dear Sheriff,

We are writing you to inform you of the undersigned organizations' intention to file a Public Records Request for information regarding individuals being held or housed in your jail for periods of time we believe may be in violation of state law.

On April 9, 2018, Louisiana Sheriffs' Association Executive Director Michael Ranatza made an alarming admission during his testimony before the State House Appropriations Committee. During his testimony, Mr. Ranatza stated that there were over 1,300 individuals currently being detained pretrial in jails throughout the state for four years or more. Mr. Ranatza stated that the number was based on an informal survey conducted by the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association and comprised data from 62 out of the 64 parish's jails. As you can imagine, this information sent shock waves throughout the entire community. Especially since the time the individuals have been detained pretrial is in excess of what is prescribed in our state's Speedy Trial Statute.

One week later, Mr. Ranatza appeared before the same committee to correct the numbers previously reported. Instead of 1,300 individuals, Mr. Ranatza claimed that the total number of individuals being detained pretrial was 2,181, of which 85 individuals have been held for more than four years without a trial; 141 have been held between three and four years; 448 have been held between two and three years; and 1,507 have been held between one and two years. Although these new numbers are different, they are equally as alarming and equally as egregious as originally reported. The Sheriffs' Association has failed to provide the survey in which the above-mentioned data is purportedly recorded to clarify any misinformation, which has left the public with more questions than answers. One thing is very clear: Hundreds of individuals are currently being detained pretrial for too long, most likely in excess of what is prescribed by state law.

According to Louisiana Code of Criminal Procedure article 701, all defendants have the right to a speedy trial. Additionally, the district attorney must indict a defendant within 45 days of arrest for misdemeanors, 60 days of arrest for felonies, and 120 days of arrest for felonies punishable by death or life imprisonment. Failure to institute prosecution as provided by statute shall result in release of the defendant if, after contradictory hearing with the district attorney, just cause for the failure is not shown. If the public is to trust the limited information provided by the Sheriffs' Association, we must believe that 85 individuals likely have been held for at least 1705 days over what is prescribed by current law, 141 individuals likely have been held for at least 975 days over what is prescribed by current law, 448 individuals likely have been held for at least 610 days over what is prescribed by current law, and 1,507 individuals likely have been held for

at least 245 days over what is prescribed by current law. If so, these numbers are unconscionable!

It is our belief that the individuals mentioned by Mr. Ranatza, and possibly more individuals, are being held pretrial for time periods that are in violation of state law. To alleviate any misinformation, the undersigned organizations are filing a Public Records Request in accordance with the Public Records Act of Louisiana, R.S. 44:1 et seq., to obtain true and accurate information regarding the number of individuals being detained.

The information being requested through the Public Records Request will assist the undersigned organizations in their effort to accurately determine who is being held pretrial in jails across the state and for how long and work to provide a cure for the factors contributing to the violation of the detained individual's constitutional rights.

We trust that you will comply with our request without the necessity of any further action on our part. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at

Sincerely,

Jane Johnson, Interim Executive Director, ACLU of Louisiana

Syrita Steib-Martin

Syrita Steib-Martin, Executive Director, Operation Restoration

Norris Henderson

Norris Henderson, Executive Director, Voices of the Experience (VOTE)

On behalf of:

Bar None
Families and Friends of Louisiana Incarcerated Children

Louisiana Council of Resources

Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition

Power Coalition for Equity and Justice

Women with a Vision, Inc.

VAYLA