

March 31, 2021

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Gov. Kim Reynolds  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol  
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Governor Reynolds,

This week, I had to do something I have feared I would have to do for years – attend the funeral of corrections employees who were murdered on the job.

The murders of Officer Robert McFarland and Nurse Lorena Schulte were tragic, and unavoidable. For years, inadequate funding has seen the number of correctional officers and corrections staff drop. In fact, currently there are 234 vacant positions within the Department of Corrections – including 14 vacant correctional officer positions at Anamosa. That number does not take into account the number of long-vacant positions that have been eliminated in recent years.

The fact is when many state employees leave for home, they do not know if they will return home, as was clearly the case for two employees of the Anamosa State Penitentiary on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Violence in the workplace has become commonplace in Iowa state institutions. Since these two heroes were murdered, we know of at least three other assaults against corrections employees. A member of ours who worked at the Independence Mental Health Institute was brutally beaten and was terminated since she did not recover fast enough for management. At the Iowa Veterans Home, staff have been attacked in the past. These attacks are unacceptable.

I am asking you on behalf of the nearly 20,000 state employees that we represent across Iowa to take the following steps yet this legislative session to help protect their safety:

- 1) Fully fund the vacant correctional officer, nursing, and support staff positions within the Iowa Department of Corrections and Community-Based Corrections;
- 2) Restore collective bargaining rights under Chapter 20 so employees can negotiate on workplace safety;
- 3) Conduct an investigation into the causes that led to the events of March 23<sup>rd</sup> in Anamosa; and
- 4) Meet with a group of state employees to discuss ways to improve conditions across the state.

These are steps that would have a meaningful impact on our members and their safety.

What happened in Anamosa was a tragedy and should never have happened. You have the power now in these final weeks of session to ensure it does not happen again. I ask you to please take these steps and show to the people who put their lives on the line each and every day for this state that this state's leaders have their back.

Sincerely,



Danny Homan  
President

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