

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 7, 2015

Christina K. Daly
Secretary
Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
2737 Centerview Drive
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Secretary Daly:

We write regarding the allegations of violence, substandard conditions, and mismanagement at the Palm Beach Juvenile Correctional Facility (PBJCF).

We are disturbed by recent reports that outline a troubling trend of violent altercations at PBJCF. Over the past year alone, there have been numerous documented acts of violence occurring in the facility, including a recent altercation that left a teenager hospitalized with a broken jaw. Equally alarming are the reports of staff members taking part in misconduct – including two former staff members now facing child neglect charges after they allegedly organized a fight between two juveniles being held at the facility.

In addition to the specter of violence that many juveniles seem to face at this facility, there have also been reports these youths face substandard living conditions. In a recent visit to the facility by Palm Beach County Mayor Shelley Vana, she observed insufficient utilities and meal options. The safety and wellbeing of the youths housed in this facility should be paramount, and reports that they live in substandard conditions and that their safety is in jeopardy must be fully investigated.

Many of these issues are alleged to stem from the mismanagement of PBJCF by its operator - Youth Services International (YSI). Questions surrounding YSI's competence to manage youth facilities statewide are not new. In 2014, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) canceled the company's contract to run the Santa Rosa Substance Abuse Treatment Center following YSI's failure to correct safety and security issues that put the welfare of the youths at the facility in danger.

While we are encouraged by your recent request to have the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), in cooperation with DJJ, investigate the conditions at PBJCF, this marks the second investigation of this facility by state officials in as many years. In light of the continued reports of violence and substandard conditions at PBJCF, as well as YSI's history of mismanagement, we urge you to suspend the operation of this facility pending the outcome of this most recent investigation.

Doing so will ensure the safety and wellbeing of the juveniles being housed at the facility. Additionally, we ask that a review of YSI's competency and ability to manage this, and other juvenile detention facilities be completed without delay.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

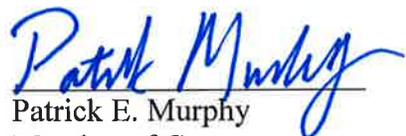
Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Patrick E. Murphy
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Cc:

Governor Rick Scott
Shelley Vana, Mayor, Palm Beach County
Richard L. Sweringen, Commissioner, Florida Department of Law Enforcement
Dave Aronberg, State Attorney, 15th Judicial Circuit