



Pete Ricketts
Governor

STATE OF NEBRASKA

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State Senator Les Seiler
District 33 State Capitol
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

RE: Corrections

Dear Chairman Seiler and Members of the LR34 Committee:

As you know, on Wednesday evening nine Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) staff were assaulted by inmates at Lincoln Correctional Center. Each was given medical attention and released to their families that evening. Today, I met with some of these staff members, as well as other staff who were assaulted in previous incidents. I heard directly from them about the challenges they face and I let them know their safety and security is a top priority for my administration. This afternoon, I also met with NDCS Director Scott Frakes and members of his leadership team to receive an update on the incident and subsequent investigation.

My conversations with staff members today reinforced what the recent culture study and legislative hearings have highlighted. Staffing continues to be a challenge for the agency. Most of the opportunities we have to address retention relate to pay, staff schedules, and connected issues, and are negotiated in the collective bargaining process. Staff at NDCS face unique challenges and dangers. We must address those in a manner that allows for maximum flexibility to identify solutions.

My administration reached out to Mike Marvin of the Nebraska Association of Public Employees (NAPE) to request that we immediately begin labor negotiations for the staff at NDCS. This request is to negotiate a contract distinct from the rest of the state employee workforce. My administration is waiting for Mr. Marvin's decision.

We are ready to negotiate a NDCS specific bargaining agreement for our corrections team. This is, however, contingent on cooperation from the union. We will be seeking additional flexibility to reward and retain top job performers, increase base salaries, and provide alternative shifts. Cooperation from the union would allow us to pursue these strategies.

These challenges did not arise overnight and they will require additional investment. I appreciate your service on the LR34 committee. We have to work together as we continue on this new course for NDCS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pete Ricketts". The signature is stylized with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Pete Ricketts
Governor of Nebraska

cc: Members of the Legislature