

PHIL BREDESEN
GOVERNOR



GEORGE M. LITTLE
COMMISSIONER

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
SIXTH FLOOR, RACHEL JACKSON BUILDING
320 SIXTH AVENUE NORTH
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0465
Office (615) 741-1000 • FAX (615) 532-8281

April 28, 2008

The Honorable Mike Turner
Tennessee House of Representatives
37 Legislative Plaza
Nashville, TN 37243-0151

Dear Representative Turner:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding our duty to operate and oversee safe and efficient correctional facilities. Your interest in what we are trying to accomplish with convicted felons is welcomed by our department.

The news reports you noted in your correspondence focused on correctional facilities that are not part of the Department of Correction. I have no official or personal knowledge concerning the allegations surrounding the operation of those facilities. The Metro Detention Facility is monitored by the Tennessee Corrections Institute. Our department takes the responsibility of monitoring the performance of the contractor in our private facilities very seriously, and we have several processes in place to protect the interests of the state.

One of the articles you listed centered on the way incidents are classified. I feel our department more than adequately addresses this issue. We have a departmental policy that specifies what incidents are to be reported to our central office by all institutions, state and private, and how each incident is to be classified. The classification of the incident is not left to the discretion of the contractor, but it is defined in our policy. We reserve the right to independently review incidents at our contract prisons.

The Department of Correction has a contract monitor assigned to each privately operated prison. Part of the monitor's responsibility is to monitor incident reporting. In situations where there is a difference of opinion about the way any reported incident is categorized or classified, the contract monitor will solve that problem or notify my staff that the problem persists, and we resolve it at our level.

The Honorable Mike Turner

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The department's contract monitors are responsible for monitoring the daily operation of the privately operated facilities and ensuring the significant incidents at the facility are reported appropriately. In addition, we have Commissioner's Designees at each privately operated facility. These staff may intercede on behalf of the Department on critical issues such as the use of force.

You may wish to direct your inquiries to the entities that may respond to your particular concerns. These include the Metro-Davidson County Sheriff's Office, Tennessee Corrections Institute, and Corrections Corporation of America. If we may be of further assistance, please contact me.

Sincerely,



George M. Little
Commissioner

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pc: Select Oversight Committee on Corrections
Chairman Bill Harmon
Vice Chairman Jim Tracy
Committee Members
Executive Director Bob McKee

Copy to: Alex Friedmann ✓