



# OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

HALL OF JUSTICE

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF



May 8, 2020

Brian K. Williams  
Executive Director  
Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission  
350 S. Figueroa Street, Suite 288  
Los Angeles, California 90071

Dear Mr. Williams:

We understand that the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) voted yesterday to send a subpoena to require the Sheriff or his designee to appear at the next session and explain our efforts to mitigate against COVID-19 in the jails, as well as to compel the Sheriff to discuss recent budget concerns. Although I was given ample time to prepare and had originally agreed to be present voluntarily, your request to add the budget discussion was sent to the Department with less than a day's notice. The Sheriff's Department will, therefore, respond to that issue separately.

Our inability to appear yesterday to address our response to COVID-19 in the jails was not meant to disregard a request by the COC. As I expressed in my email to Ingrid Williams, I was unable to appear at the meeting to explain the robust measures the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Department) has in place because of active, ongoing litigation. Specifically, Dignity and Power Now and the Youth Justice Coalition have filed a lawsuit (*Rodney Cullors, et al. v. County of Los Angeles*, Los Angeles Superior Court Case No. 20STCV16414) claiming that both the Department and Correctional Health Services have been acting with deliberate indifference towards the health and needs of the inmates in our care during this pandemic. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Notably, Patrisse Cullors, one of the COC's invited speakers that appeared yesterday, is an actual plaintiff in this lawsuit against the County and Sheriff Villanueva, and it would have been potentially inappropriate to speak on this matter with her present and given the fact we are both represented by counsel in the current litigation.

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These plaintiffs were seeking a temporary restraining order and mandatory injunction to require drastic changes in jail practices as well as the mass release of certain inmates. On May 5, 2020, the Court found that plaintiffs, despite presenting exhaustive evidence, including several expert declarations, failed to meet their burden of showing that defendants have acted with deliberate indifference and denied all of their requests for restraining orders and injunctions. Yet the lawsuit continues. I have attached the seven declarations filed in the lawsuit, which thoroughly explain our ongoing and energetic efforts during this difficult time. As more information becomes available in the course of the litigation or the litigation concludes, that information can be provided to you at that time.

To that end, I will voluntarily appear at your next meeting. However, on the advice of the Department counsel handling the foregoing litigation, my appearance is contingent on three requests: (1) The COC not invite the plaintiffs in the *Cullors* lawsuit, or their representatives and members, to be guest speakers at the same meeting; and (2) Members of the COC not allow the public to ask questions directly to me, nor convey any such questions by the public to me when they are asked, given that would be highly irregular during pending litigation, and discovery in this matter is ongoing; and (3) As is your normal practice, I would also appreciate receiving all of the COC's questions in advance so that I may prepare an appropriate presentation.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns and how the COC wishes to proceed.

Sincerely,

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Chase', with a stylized flourish at the end.

BRUCE D. CHASE  
ASSISTANT SHERIFF  
CUSTODY OPERATIONS