

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ
7TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

August 13, 2019

Michael E. Horowitz
Inspector General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Inspector General Horowitz and Director Wray:

As the Member of Congress with the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC) in my district, I write to voice concerns about the continued alleged culture of mismanagement and inadequate leadership at this facility. Circumstances surrounding the recent suicide of Jeffrey Epstein while he was in federal custody draw light to other problems that have been previously documented at the detention facility. I suspect current events at MCC are symptomatic of larger issues afflicting the facility's professional culture, as suggested by a list of previous disconcerting events.

For example:

- A lieutenant physically abused a detainee, resulting in fractures to the detainee's eye socket and cheekbone;¹
- A correction officer was sentenced to 7 years in prison after being convicted of raping a female detainee;²
- An officer has been formally charged for sexually abusing female detainees in exchange for personal hygiene products, food and other items.³
- Officers attempted to "cover up" the death of Roberto Grant by claiming the prisoner's cause of death was a drug overdose when a city coroner determined the cause to be blunt force trauma.⁴

Given his notoriety, I understand that your respective agencies will investigate the events leading to the death of Mr. Epstein. This review is wholly appropriate, and I thank you for conducting it.

¹ Metro Briefing | New York: Manhattan: Guard Admits Beating. Preston, J. The New York Times. May 3, 2005. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/03/nyregion/metro-briefing-new-york-manhattan-guard-admits-beating.html>

² Ex-correction Officer Sentenced for Raping Inmate. Eustachewich, L. New York Post. May 4, 2016. <https://nypost.com/2016/05/04/ex-correction-officer-sentenced-for-raping-inmate/>

³ Federal Prison Guard Charged With Sexually Abusing Inmates, Trading Sex for Makeup and Food. NBC New York. May 21, 2019. <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Federal-Prison-Guard-Sex-Contraband-510220121.html>

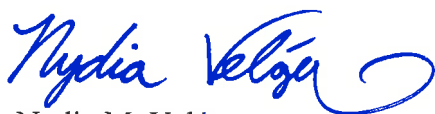
⁴ Manhattan Jail Staffers Blamed OD for Inmate's Death in Coverup Try: \$20M Suit. Bekiempis, V. New York Daily News. September 7, 2017. <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/manhattan/jail-staffers-blamed-od-inmate-death-coverup-suit-article-1.3476132>

However, I urge you to expand the scope of your inquiry to scrutinize the current professional culture at this facility. Such review should also examine the continued use of augmentation policy at this facility given recent reports suggesting one non-correctional staff member was partially responsible for Mr. Epstein's safety in the Special Housing Unit (SHU).⁵

It is vital that we continue ensuring the victims of Mr. Epstein's deeds receive the justice they deserve, including a full accounting of Mr. Epstein's death under federal custody. Likewise, it is important that broader management problems pervading MCC, which may have enabled Mr. Epstein's suicide, be examined, rooted out and corrected.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns. Should you or your staff have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact my Washington office at 202-225-2361.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

⁵ In Short-Staffed Jail, Epstein Was Left Alone for Hours; Guard Was Substitute. Watkins, A; Benner, K; Ivory, D. The New York Times. August 12, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/12/nyregion/epstein-barr.html>