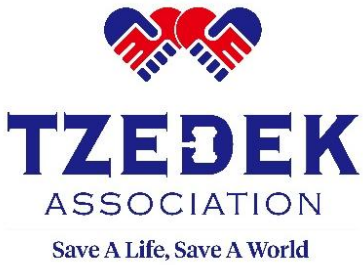

July 7, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Grace Meng
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

The undersigned conservative and center-right organizations write to respectfully urge Congress to provide the Federal Bureau of Prisons ("BOP") with full funding at the level requested in President Trump's FY 2027 budget proposal.[1]

[1] FY 2027 Budget Request, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons. https://www.justice.gov/jmd/media/1434176/dl?inline

At a time when the majority of Americans rightly reject efforts to "defund the police,"[2] Congress should likewise reject efforts to underfund the federal correctional system responsible for maintaining safety, order, and security inside our nation's prisons. Supporting the BOP is supporting law enforcement. The men and women working in federal correctional institutions are frontline public safety professionals, and they need the resources necessary to safely and effectively perform their duties.

The Administration's FY 2027 budget request appropriately recognizes the serious operational and staffing challenges confronting the BOP. The proposal requests approximately $10.5 billion for the Bureau in order to maintain institutional safety, address staffing shortages, support recruitment and retention efforts, and modernize prison operations.[3]

For years, the BOP has faced persistent staffing shortages that have forced the agency to rely extensively on "augmentation," a practice in which non-custody personnel—including chaplains, teachers, counselors, medical personnel, and other professional staff—are assigned to perform correctional officer duties to fill security gaps.[4] This practice is not sustainable, nor is it an appropriate personnel strategy.[5] Chaplains should be serving the spiritual needs of inmates, educators should be teaching, and healthcare professionals should be focused on providing medical care—not routinely covering correctional posts due to inadequate staffing levels.

Most concerningly, staffing deficiencies create significant public safety concerns for correctional officers, institutional staff, inmates, and surrounding communities alike. The BOP workforce already faces extraordinarily demanding working conditions. Mandatory overtime and augmentation lead to more inmate violence, increased overtime burdens, burnout, retention challenges, and declining morale throughout the federal prison system.[6] Adequate staffing is essential to safeguard the men and women who work in these facilities every day, as well as the inmate population.

Proper funding is also critical to sustaining effective rehabilitation and recidivism-reduction efforts. Conservative criminal justice reforms such as the First Step Act were built upon the principle that reducing recidivism enhances public safety by lowering future crime and reducing the number of future victims. Evidence-based programming, vocational training, substance abuse

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[2] "Fewer than 1 in 5 supports 'defund the police' movement, USA TODAY/Ipsos Poll finds". https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/03/07/usa-today-ipsos-poll-just-18-support-defund-police-movement/4599232001/

[3] FY 2027 Budget Request, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons. https://www.justice.gov/jmd/media/1434176/dl?inline

[4] See U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, "Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Staffing Challenges". https://oig.justice.gov/reports/review-federal-bureau-prisons-medical-staffing-challenges

[5] See American Federation of Government Employees testimony regarding BOP staffing shortages and augmentation practices. https://www.afge.org/article/lawmakers-seek-details-on-bop-plan-to-address-staffing-crisis/

[6] "A Cascading Crisis: U.S. Federal Prisons Grapple with Decades of Unsafe Understaffing". https://www.asisonline.org/security-management-magazine/articles/2026/03/corrections-security/unsafe-understaffing/

treatment, educational opportunities, and successful reentry preparation have all been proven to substantially reduce rates of reoffending.[7]

Staffing shortages impair the Bureau's ability to maintain and operate such recidivism-reduction programs. In many BOP facilities, anti-recidivism programming has had to be suspended because of augmentation, and/or due to the lack of sufficient correctional staff to maintain basic security.[8] This creates a dangerous cycle in which understaffing undermines the very programming designed to reduce re-offending and improve community safety.

We therefore respectfully urge Congress to fully fund the President's budget request for the Federal Bureau of Prisons. A secure and properly functioning federal prison system is not optional. It is a core responsibility of government. And it is what taxpayers expect.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of law enforcement, public safety, and effective criminal justice policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Rabbi Moshe Margaretten
President
Tzedek Association

David Safavian, Esq.
Chief Operating Officer
Unify.US

Brett Tolman
Executive Director
Right on Crime

Jason Pye
Vice President
Due Process Institute

Justin Keener
President
Americans for Public Safety

Scott Peyton
Senior Director of Advocacy
Prison Fellowship

David Bowser
Director of Legislative Affairs
Faith & Freedom Coalition

Tarrah Callahan
Executive Director
Conservatives for Criminal Justice Reform

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[7] See U.S. Department of Justice, "2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism"; Council on Criminal Justice analyses regarding recidivism reduction and First Step Act programming outcomes. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/18upr9yfup0514.pdf

[8] See reports and testimony regarding staffing-related disruptions to BOP programming and operations. https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48826