



Shelby County Sheriff's Office

Floyd Bonner, Jr., Sheriff

April 16, 2024

Honorable Miska Clay Bibbs, Chairwoman
Shelby County Board of Commissioners
160 N. Main, Suite 600
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

via e-mail

Dear Commissioner Bibbs:

In 2014, the Shelby County Sheriff's Office ("SCSO") voluntarily agreed to undertake the operation of the Youth Detention Facility at the request of newly-elected Judge Dan Michael. This was done with a "hand-shake." The facility was already under the oversight of the Department of Justice ("DOJ"). After a year of planning, the Sheriff's staff began its journey in July 2015 to serve the youth and the community at the facility.

During that time, we worked with many national experts who provided training opportunities, suggestions, and coaching. We eliminated isolation of youth, we began a robust Positive Behavior Management System, and began Cognitive Behavior Training 2.0 among many other improvements. I am attaching the Shelby County portion of a "Not in Isolation" article as well as the close-out letter from Dr. David Roush, who served as the DOJ consultant and then served as the SCSO consultant when oversight ended.

In 2015, we took the plea for blended sentencing across Tennessee and then-Senate Majority leader Mark Norris championed the bill. While it did not pass then, the seed was planted and it now has more widespread support. Also, in 2015 we began the search for a facility for the youth that had proper classroom space, a proper gym and outdoor space, natural light, and better office space for our medical and school partners.

The newly renovated Youth Justice and Education Center opened last year, with the support of Mayor Harris and your body.

It is important to remember that from 2020 through October 2023, there was federal litigation about Covid protocols. The standards are higher for detention



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facilities due to the congregate living conditions and the possibility of quickly spreading outbreak. The SCSO followed the advice of counsel and continued the protocols into 2024. We are finally relaxing the policies.

Just like other law enforcement and corrections agencies across the United States, we are struggling with staffing. We have increased pay, offered bonuses and referral payments, expanded recruiting efforts, and your body recently approved the hiring of several different firms to expand recruiting efforts.

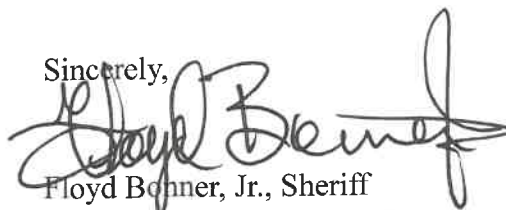
This brings me to share with you a decision I very reluctantly made and communicated to our Juvenile Court Judge Tarik Sugarmon in December 2023. I am required by law to operate the Jail and Jail East. I am not required to operate the Youth Center and need the staff assigned there to increase security and safety at the adult facilities.

I told the Judge that we would end our voluntary relationship on December 31, 2024. A copy of the December 14, 2023 letter is attached. We have already provided financial, staff, and other informational material to the Judge and his staff, including a draft transition plan modeled after the one we used in 2014-2015. We stand ready to move the portions of the SCSO budget that apply to the Youth Center when the Court is ready to take over operations and we will certainly be ready to assist throughout and after the transition.

We are very proud of what we were able to accomplish at the Center. We came with the purpose of serving the youth and helping them overcome trauma and other difficulties. We also brought our love and respect for them and sometimes those are the best ingredients for healing. We have seen them mature and learn self-control. Many now excel at school and some have developed talents for art, theatre, writing and song-writing. We hate to leave but are certain they are in the very capable hands of Judge Sugarmon.

I wanted you to know about this as we moved forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Floyd Bohner, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Floyd Bohner, Jr., Sheriff

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Enclosures

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cc: Honorable Lee Harris, Mayor
Shelby County Government

Honorable Judge Tarik Sugarmon, Judge
Memphis and Shelby County Juvenile Court

Honorable Charlie, Caswell, Jr., Chair Pro Tempore

Honorable Amber Mills

Honorable David C. Bradford

Honorable Brandon Morrison

Honorable Shante K. Avant

Honorable Henri E. Brooks

Honorable Mick Wright

Honorable Mickell M. Lowrey

Honorable Erika Sugarmon

Honorable Edmund Ford, Jr.

Honorable Britney Thornton

Honorable Michael Whaley