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To: County Council <CountyCouncil@co.monroe.in.us>

Cc: Phil Parker <pparker@co.monroe.in.us>; Kyle Gibbons <kgibbons@co.monroe.in.us>; Kim Shell <kshell@co.monroe.in.us>

Subject: Hiring Freeze

Members of the Monroe County Council,

When I assumed office as Sheriff on January 1, 2023, I inherited a jail plagued by severe staffing shortages. These vacancies directly contributed to the deplorable living and working conditions that existed within the facility at that time. The Council itself recognized these vacancies as a major concern, as they were central to the operational instability, safety risks, and morale issues that plagued the jail. From my first day in office, I made it a top priority to correct these conditions and rebuild both the workforce and the morale within the Monroe County Correctional Center.

To that end, my administration implemented a streamlined and efficient hiring process that has allowed us to maintain a nearly fully staffed jail for almost two years. The results have been clear and measurable: improved safety for officers and inmates, better cleanliness and order and a noticeable increase in staff morale and retention. These gains represent the hard work and commitment of many, and I am proud of the progress we've achieved with the help of the County Council and Board of Commissioners.

The hiring freeze enacted by the County Council on September 30, 2025, threatens to reverse this progress if applied to corrections positions. Staffing in a correctional facility is not a budgetary convenience: it is a critical matter of safety, compliance, and liability. Even one unfilled position creates a ripple effect that harms operations and endangers both staff and residents.

A hiring freeze does more than simply pause the filling of a position. It delays the entire hiring process by requiring additional layers of approval before a vacancy can even be advertised. Each delay; from the time a position becomes vacant, to the time permission is granted to post, to the time an applicant is hired, extends the gap in staffing coverage. These delays trickle down to every level of jail operations, forcing existing staff to work longer shifts, increasing fatigue, driving up overtime costs, affecting officer and inmate safety and eroding morale.

Even a short disruption in the hiring pipeline can take months to correct, as it interrupts the steady recruitment flow that has been essential to maintaining adequate staffing. Once the momentum of hiring is lost, the effects compound: training schedules must be reset, shifts must be rearranged, and experienced officers are left carrying a heavier load.

When vacancies go unfilled, we see:

- Reduced officer and inmate safety due to inadequate supervision;

- Increased overtime, which costs more than filling positions promptly;
- Fatigue, burnout, and higher turnover among staff;
- Decline in morale and facility cleanliness;
- Diminished ability to respond effectively to emergencies; and
- Increased exposure to legal and financial liability for the County.

These are not hypothetical outcomes. They are the very same issues that existed before I took office, issues this Council rightly identified as unacceptable. A one-size-fits-all hiring freeze is not responsible management for a 24/7 correctional facility that must, by law, maintain minimum staffing levels.

I also urge the Council to remember that Monroe County is currently operating under a Private Settlement Agreement with the ACLU of Indiana related to jail overcrowding. The ACLU has taken notice of the improvements made under my administration and has acknowledged the positive changes in both conditions and cooperation. Applying a hiring freeze to the jail would undermine that progress and risk damaging the County's improved relationship with the ACLU, especially at a time when the construction of a new jail faces real and ongoing delays.

It is in the County's best interest; legally, fiscally, and ethically, to ensure that staffing levels remain stable and compliant. Undermining staffing at the Correctional Center now would not only jeopardize safety but could also invite renewed scrutiny and potential legal action.

I respectfully ask each Council member to consider this simple question:

"Would you truly vote in a public meeting to not to allow opening and filling a vacant correctional position at the jail?"

If the honest answer is no, then it stands to reason that corrections positions must be exempted from this hiring freeze. To maintain a purely symbolic freeze, knowing it will directly harm operations, safety, and morale, would be inconsistent with responsible governance and public safety priorities.

I plan to engage in conversation with the Council regarding this issue at the October 28, 2025, meeting. I remain committed to transparency, collaboration, and accountability and I ask for the Council's partnership in maintaining the progress we have made. The safety of our officers, inmates, and the broader community depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.