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Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

To: Juvenile and Adult Facility Residents and Family Members

From: Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Date: May 26, 2021

Re: Coronavirus and KDOC updates

I want to begin this message highlighting some great work by residents and staff at KJCC. Two of our Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex (KJCC) residents submitted award-winning essays as part of the 2021 PbS (Performance-based Standards) Reentry Award, sponsored by the PbS Education and Employment Foundation. They will each receive a \$500 gift card to a major store of their choosing. The awards are for the purchase of clothing, shoes, household items and other essentials to prepare for success upon release, with both award winners scheduled for release in June.

A serious health risk for correctional agencies across the country is the continued introduction of illegal substances through the U.S. Mail into facilities. In Kansas we are feeling this as well. We recently had two resident deaths suspected of being caused by their use of substances that may have been received through the mail, and we had a staff member who became ill at work after being exposed to such substances while responding to save the life of a resident under the influence.

In the past few months, we have implemented additional mitigation strategies, provided educational materials to residents, and communicated with residents about access to resources in each facility to help overcome addiction. In light of recent events, and to protect the health and safety of everyone, we are now exploring strategies used in other states to combat the introduction of substances through the mail with some success. These strategies could be piloted by KDOC within the next few weeks. If the pilots prove effective, we will likely implement them in all KDOC facilities. We will keep you informed as this moves forward.

We have seen an increase in feedback from residents and families over the past several weeks about challenges with electronic communication in our facilities. Thank you for bringing these issues to our attention. We expect the vendor to be responsive to our needs, and everyone's feedback is vital. The vendor believes it to be an issue with bandwidth and they are currently working on a solution. We understand the frustration that is created when a video visitation freezes or is dropped, or other issues with communication happen. We will keep everyone updated and look forward to improved service.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and commitment to the COVID-19 mitigation protocols. Our COVID-19 positive numbers remain low, and staff and residents continue to receive vaccinations. All of this is contributing to our society's recovery from this life-changing pandemic.