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## **CLASS ACTION FILED AGAINST BUREAU OF PRISONS FOR GROSS FAILURES IN COVID-19 RESPONSE AT FCI DANBURY**

A class action lawsuit was filed today in federal court in Connecticut seeking to require federal officials to provide emergency measures to protect the 1,000+ women and men at the three facilities within the low security federal prison in Danbury, Connecticut (“FCI Danbury”) from COVID-19.

The lawsuit responds to the COVID-19 disaster that is underway at FCI Danbury. The prison has one of the biggest outbreaks in the federal system, and in recent weeks, more than forty incarcerated people and more than thirty staff have tested positive for COVID-19. Many more are likely positive, but the Bureau of Prisons is not reliably releasing that information and, worse yet, for some time stopped testing.

“Public health experts uniformly agree that prisons are hot spots for the spread of COVID-19 that require prison officials to take swift action to protect the lives of those in their custody,” said Professor Sarah Russell, one of the lawyers representing the proposed class. “FCI Danbury has completely disregarded these warnings, placing incarcerated people at an unbearable and unconstitutional risk of contracting the disease.”

The people imprisoned at FCI Danbury are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19. They live in close quarters, with units containing more than 100 people lined up in rows of bunk beds, and with communal bathrooms and dining areas. Many are experiencing serious symptoms, including high fevers and difficulty breathing, but have not been tested or removed from these crowded living areas. Access to medical care in the facility is woefully inadequate, and there have been significant delays in getting critically ill prisoners transported to local hospitals.

FCI Danbury contains a women’s “camp,” the lowest level security facility in the entire federal prison system. Yet, despite the ability to release low-level prisoners, those incarcerated at FCI Danbury remain in dangerous living conditions virtually certain to promote the spread of COVID-19 through the Danbury prisoner and staff populations.

The lawsuit filed today asks the federal district court to order that the Bureau of Prisons immediately identify prisoners who are medically vulnerable and can be safely relocated to home confinement, as Attorney General Barr has directed, and to provide safe and humane conditions for those imprisoned at FCI Danbury.

The case is brought by the law firm of Silver Golub & Teitell LLP, the Civil Justice Clinic at Quinnipiac University School of Law, and the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization at Yale Law School.

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