

Dear Members of the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee:

As I write you today, the staffing crisis in Vermont's correctional facilities— an issue that I have testified about before your Committee so many times— rages on, unabated. The issue is affecting frontline staff across the State, but this recent WCAX segment on the severity of the crisis in Newport is a good example what our members face on a daily basis:

[WCAX: "Corrections officers dismayed by staffing at Newport Prison"](#)

As you'll see in the video linked above, Northern State, a facility that requires no fewer than 80 employees to safely function regularly dips below 50 employees. This crisis is a powder keg that threatens to catastrophically explode at any moment, and the toll that is being taken on our members cannot be overstated.

The Governor cannot be allowed to continue to minimize the severity of this problem. The General Assembly must use the full scope of its oversight powers to demand an immediate response from the Administration. Action must be taken, and it must be taken now.

I request the opportunity to testify before you at your November meeting on this topic. In the interim, I implore you not to take the Administration's reassurances at face value. They must be made to act.

Respectfully,

Steve Howard
Executive Director, VSEA