**Sheriff Nick Cocchi, Hampden County (Mass.) Sheriff’s Department**

**Audio Release to Inmates**

**Monday, March 16, 2020**

Good morning everyone, this is Sheriff Nick Cocchi.

I’d like to update you on some important changes we’re making to our policies and procedures in an effort to keep everybody in our care, as well as your families, safe and healthy as the world deals with the Coronavirus.

None of these changes were made lightly and although we are planning on keeping these changes in place for at least the next 60 days, we will be continually evaluating our decisions to make sure these changes remain necessary and are the best way to ensure the health and safety of every staff member and person in our care.

**Personal visits and communications:** As of today, Monday, March 16, I have authorized two hours of free phone calls each week for our offender population. This will ensure you are able to keep in contact with your family and friends as we temporarily stop all personal visits for the next 60 days or until the Coronavirus threat passes. All of our inmates will receive three free envelopes per week to send letter to their loved ones as well.

Additionally, I have directed my staff to come up with a process to establish video visiting. We are working on preparing the technology and infrastructure now with the hopes of rolling this out as soon as possible.

**Professional visits:** Attorney and clergy visits as well as all other court ordered visits will continue but will occur in a non-contact manner to reduce the potential spread of the Coronavirus. With this in mind, all professional visitors will be required to wear a facemask. All other professional visits are temporarily suspended.

**Property drop off and retrieval:** There will be no property pickup until further notice. The regular 30-day time limit to pick up property will be extended. Individuals will be able to pick up property within 60 days from the time property pickup resumes.

**Programs:** all offended programing provided by non-Sheriff’s department employees will be temporarily be placed on hold. While programing provided by Sheriff’s department staff will continue in a limited capacity until further notice. All program volunteers, interns and program vendors will discontinue their services inside of our facilities until further notice.

**Medical:** All medical services will continue with additional attention being paid to transmission of infectious diseases throughout our facilities. Our enhanced screening procedures and subsequent medical follow ups will remain in effect indefinitely.

Classification and transportation: Beginning today, Monday, all court sessions will continue in a limited capacity with an emphasis placed on video conferencing.

**Meal services:** Our meal to the population will continue as normal.

I know some of these changes will be a difficult adjustment but please understand that we are doing this to keep everyone in our care, as well as your families, safe and healthy. As of right now, we have a very safe and healthy environment, so it is my duty to everything in my power, as your sheriff, to ensure that continues to be the case. We continuously evaluate all aspects of our correctional operation. We will continue to make all necessary changes as the situation evolves. It will take us all, together, to fight against the spread of this Coronavirus. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

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