

Testimony on FY 21 Special Appropriation

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My name is Michael McCullough. I'm an officer in the Montgomery County Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Over this past year, because of Covid, our work life has changed dramatically. Not only have we had to pick up a lot of additional hours, the way we work has changed too.

Because a lot of our coworkers have pre-existing conditions, Covid could really hurt them. They can't come to work. Meanwhile, those of us healthy enough to risk exposure now must double mask for eight-hours-a-day to protect ourselves and our families.

The whole culture of our job has changed. Our policies are different. It's taxing on both your body and your mind.

There are parts of the job now that used to be inmate duties, like collecting food cards or preparing food trays. These have now become part of our general duties. We can't let inmates do the chores they used to do.

And then there are the inmates who test positive. We can't just tuck them away somewhere to be left alone to quarantine. We still have to deal with them, someone still must be in charge. There are inmates with mental health issues. Some are depressed, some don't comprehend the mask mandate. We have to calm them down, or deal with their issues. There's a lot of potential exposure, every day.

We are doing all we can to avoid the pandemic but we still have to work in close proximity with one another. There's little that we can do to avoid even our fellow officers.

Personally, I can't even have a cup of coffee at work anymore. If I want to drink a cup of coffee, I have to go find a closet or empty room to hide away so I'm safe to take off my mask and sip a cup of coffee. It's a different world.

We deserved our general wage adjustment and other increases last year before the pandemic. We definitely deserve them now. I urge you to pass this increase.