



NAACP

OKALOOSA COUNTY BRANCH

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September 29, 2025

Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners

Okaloosa County Courthouse

101 E. James Lee Blvd.

Crestview, FL 32536

Subject: Observations Following NAACP Tour of County Jail

On Tuesday, August 26, 2025, representatives of the Okaloosa County NAACP branch toured the Okaloosa County Jail in Crestview, FL. We were honored to have been accompanied by Commissioner Paul Mixon, Chairman of the Board, along with John Moring, Corrections Director, other corrections leadership, and medical staff. All personnel were very professional and helpful during our visit.

Findings

1. Capacity versus population: The jail Corrections Director briefed us the facility had a capacity of 594 inmates and was currently housing a population of approximately 752.
2. Pretrial population: Approximately 90% of the people housed at the jail are not convicted and remain incarcerated primarily because they are unable to afford bail or are awaiting trial.
3. Overcrowded housing conditions: Portable beds known as "boats" placed throughout pods resulted in inmates lying in walkways while others stepped over them; pods and cells appeared cramped and congested. These "boats" were made of a hard, plastic material and had a height of about 3 inches above the floor.
4. Insufficient program infrastructure: The facility lacks the physical space, equipment, and dedicated staffing required to run basic educational, vocational, recreational, and therapeutic programs that support mental health and reduce recidivism rates.
5. Operational and safety impacts: Overcrowding and the absence of sustained programming strain staff capacity, compromise healthcare and sanitation, increase mental health crises and violence risk, and impede rehabilitative efforts necessary for successful reentry.

. Concerns:

- The combination of mass pretrial detention and overcrowded, program-poor conditions raise urgent civil justice and public safety concerns.
- Without space, staffing, and program resources, the staff cannot deliver interventions proven to improve mental health or reduce recidivism, resulting in poorer outcomes for individuals and the community.

Requested Actions:

1. Emergency population reduction within 60 days to mitigate immediate health and safety risks, including prioritized case reviews for safe release, expanded non-monetary pretrial supervision, and expedited transfers when appropriate.
2. Commission an independent assessment within 90 days evaluating capacity, housing practices, medical and mental health services, staffing levels, and program infrastructure, with a publicly released written report.
3. Immediate investment in program infrastructure and staffing to create dedicated classroom and vocational space, library and recreation areas, mental health treatment rooms, and technology for virtual programming, plus hiring or designating trained program coordinators.
4. Pretrial reforms to reduce reliance on money bail, expand pretrial services, and implement evidence-based alternatives that prevent unnecessary pretrial detention.
5. Written action plan and timeline within 90 days describing specific steps the county will take to reduce population density, expand programming capacity, and improve clinical services.
6. Public briefing within 120 days with the Board, jail leadership, and community stakeholders to review findings, the independent assessment scope, and possible implementation timelines.

Addressing overcrowding, the disproportionate pretrial population, and the jail's lack of infrastructure for basic programming is essential to protect safety, uphold dignity, and improve outcomes for individuals and the community. The Okaloosa County NAACP stands ready to collaborate with the Board and county leadership to develop humane, effective solutions.

Respectfully submitted,

Sabu L. Williams

President