

WESTERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL JAIL

*Serving the City of Salem and the Counties of
Franklin, Montgomery, and Roanoke*

Colonel Bobby D. Russell
Superintendent

Lt. Colonel David F. Cox
Deputy Superintendent



Major Gregory P. Winston
Security Division Commander

Major Amanda K. Tuck
Services Division Commander

January 17, 2014

Chairman McDougle and Members of the Committee:

I am Bobby Russell, the Superintendent of the Western Virginia Regional Jail, and a board member of the Virginia Association of Regional Jails.

The Western Virginia Regional Jail's member jurisdictions are Franklin, Roanoke and Montgomery counties and the City of Salem. The jail opened in early 2009 and employs over 200 people. The facility houses both men and women and currently is holding 775 inmates.

The Virginia Association of Regional Jails represents Virginia's (23) regional jails. On behalf of the Association, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the Office of the State Inspector General's recent report on mental health services in local and regional jails.

After speaking with Mr. Bevelacqua about the scope of the study, the Association agreed to participate and a number of regional jails were reviewed.

The Association is in total agreement with the goal of improving inmate mental health services.

Virginia Association of Regional Jails
Response – SOIG Report on Mental Health

While our members facilitate professional mental health services on a daily basis, we do not think that inmates with acute challenges should be in jail settings.

As you know, jails are not licensed treatment facilities, and the vast majority of correctional officers and executives are not licensed medical and behavioral health professionals.

The Association and the jail superintendents are committed to working with you and your colleagues; Mr. Hickman; the executive branch; the Office of the State Inspector General; and additional stakeholders to evaluate the report's findings and to help identify new resources and innovative treatment options.

To this end, we endorse Senator Howell's Senate Joint Resolution 16, which proposes a joint subcommittee to study mental health and the criminal justice system, including mental health services in jails. I must add that the Association is grateful to be included as a member of the subcommittee.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for your time and the courtesy of allowing us to appear today.

We look forward to working with you.