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Board of County Commissioners Calls for Cooperation in Jail Investigation

The rising number of detainee deaths at the Cleveland Detention Center has been a growing cause of concern for Cleveland County Commissioners over the course of Sheriff Chris Amason's tenure in office. Now, the sheriff's lack of response to the county's own confidential, internal investigation is growing equally concerning.

The Board of County Commissioners is calling on Sheriff Chris Amason to fully cooperate with the root cause analysis investigation being conducted by SIMCO Correctional Consulting, LLC under the guidance of the Cleveland County District Attorney's Office.

The investigation began upon commissioners' approval of the contract, Sept. 9, 2024. As of date, more than 6 weeks later, SIMCO has not received any requested investigative materials from the sheriff's office.

Investigators hired by the county, working under attorney client privilege, have contacted the sheriff's office to request documents in an effort to identify and analyze the root causes of jail inmate deaths; develop actionable recommendations to prevent future deaths; and enhance overall safety and health protocols within the jail.

Elected officials have a moral and legal obligation to conduct due diligence in improving detainee health outcomes. While commissioners recognize inmate populations tend to be higher-risk than the average population, they find any preventable loss of life intolerable.

The sheriff's lack of response thus far is simply unacceptable. If future requests for cooperation go unanswered, the Board of County Commissioners will consider using the power granted under Oklahoma State Statute to subpoena relevant materials from the sheriff's office.