



**For Immediate Release**

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## **STATEMENT: AFSCME Council 61 Stands In Solidarity With Family Of Murdered Correctional Officer As They Sue The State Of Iowa**

*AFSCME Council 61 President Todd Copley: Brave correctional officers deserve better than systemic negligence, disregard for their safety*

**Des Moines, Iowa** – The family of Robert McFarland has [filed a lawsuit](#) against the state of Iowa, three years after McFarland was killed doing his job as a correctional officer at Anamosa State Penitentiary. The lawsuit was filed by Robert McFarland's wife, Sara Montague McFarland, who alleges that there was severe understaffing and gross negligence that contributed to the attack that ended her husband's life.

Independent reviews by [Iowa media](#) and a [state-funded report](#) confirmed that Iowa's correctional facilities face staffing shortages and security issues. Lorena Schulte, a nurse at Anamosa State Penitentiary, was also killed. The two inmates who killed McFarland and Schulte are serving life sentences for murder.

McFarland and Schulte were members of AFSCME Council 61, the labor union representing Iowa's correctional officers. AFSCME Council 61's President Todd Copley issued the following statement in solidarity with McFarland's family as they file suit against the state of Iowa:

*"As a community, we stand in solidarity with the families of correctional officer Robert McFarland and nurse Lorena Schulte, whose lives were tragically taken in the line of duty at the Anamosa State Penitentiary. The lawsuit brought forth by Officer McFarland's family sheds light on critical issues plaguing our correctional system, including overcrowding, understaffing, and inadequate safety measures. It's time to hold the Iowa Department of Corrections accountable for failing to provide a safe work environment for our correctional staff."*

*"Every day, these brave men and women put their lives on the line to ensure the safety and security of our communities. They deserve better than to face such preventable dangers due to systemic negligence and disregard for their well-being. The lack of proper staffing levels, training, and emergency preparedness not only endangers the lives of our correctional officers but also compromises the safety of inmates and the surrounding community."*

*"It's unacceptable that warnings about safety deficiencies were ignored, leading to this tragic outcome. Meaningful reforms must be implemented to address the root causes of these issues and ensure the safety and well-being of all correctional staff statewide."*

*"We demand justice for Officer McFarland, Nurse Schulte, and their families. We demand accountability from the Iowa Department of Corrections. And we demand immediate action to fix the systemic failures that have put the lives of our correctional staff at risk. Our brave men and women in uniform deserve nothing less."*

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*Members of The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Council 61 (AFSCME Council 61) do the work every day that makes Iowa work. AFSCME Council 61 is proud to represent thousands of public employees including law enforcement and correctional officers, firefighters, mental health workers, professional school staff, emergency responders, home health care and child care providers, and many other workers.*

*To learn more visit [AFSCMECouncil61.org](https://www.afscmecouncil61.org).*