

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 10, 2019

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, DC. 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr:

This morning, Jeffrey Epstein, the wealthy American financier indicted on numerous charges for running an international child sex trafficking ring, was found dead by apparent suicide. Epstein was being held in federal Bureau of Prisons custody after a federal judge denied him bail. Disturbingly, his suicide occurred after an incident less than three weeks ago when he was found injured and semi-conscious in his cell from a possible suicide attempt. News reporting indicates that he was then placed on suicide watch but may have been taken off suicide watch before today's events.

The Department of Justice failed, and today Jeffrey Epstein's co-conspirators think they might have just gotten one last sweetheart deal. Every single person in the Justice Department — from your Main Justice headquarters staff all the way to the night-shift jailer — knew that this man was a suicide risk, and that his dark secrets couldn't be allowed to die with him.

Given Epstein's previous attempted suicide, he should have been locked in a padded room under unbroken, 24/7, constant surveillance. Obviously, heads must roll.

During your nomination process, you committed to me to ensuring that justice would be done for his victims. I was pleased to see the Department open an investigation into the mishandling of the ridiculous 2008 non-prosecution agreement, and then the decision to bring subsequent charges against Epstein. Knowing this monster's history of thwarting justice, I also called for him to be held without bail upon his July 6 arrest.

It should have been abundantly clear that Epstein would go to any lengths to avoid being held accountable for his crimes, including by killing himself. Being responsible for Epstein's custody and prosecution, the Department of Justice should not have allowed this to happen. His death not only deprives his victims of the opportunity to confront him in court and to see him held accountable for his crimes, but also makes it harder to unravel his ring and to hold accountable the many other powerful men who raped and exploited these children.

The Department must answer the following urgent questions for the American people:

1. Was Epstein in fact placed on suicide watch following his previous possible suicide attempt?

2. If so, was Epstein taken off suicide watch prior to his apparent suicide this morning? And if so, why?

3. Can you confirm that you are ordering two investigations: one — presumably Inspector General investigation — into the Bureau of Prison's mismanagement of the incarceration of Epstein; and another — presumably FBI investigation — into any possible criminal activity surrounding this mismanagement?

4. Can you certify that all other potential evidence that investigators were pursuing relating to Epstein's co-conspirators is being immediately secured by the Department of Justice, so that no additional evidence or potential testimony is also squandered?

Thank you in advance for your resolve to peruse justice in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Sasse". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Ben Sasse
United States Senator
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Oversight,
Agency Action, Federal Rights and Federal Courts