

Protect Incarcerated People from COVID-19

Toolkit to Urge State Leaders to Grant Emergency Releases and Guarantee Early & Ongoing Access to the COVID-19 Vaccine for Incarcerated People

Mourning Our Losses is a crowd-sourced memorial site that honors those who have died while living or working behind bars during the COVID-19 pandemic and advocates for the release of incarcerated people across the country. Read unique memorials for those who have died at mourningourlosses.org.

Acknowledgements:

This toolkit was written by Mourning Our Losses with valuable input from Anthony Ehlers, Adamu Chan, Southern Center for Human Rights, Justice Policy Institute, Texas After Violence Project, and Yale Undergraduate Prison Project. Unless otherwise cited, state prison COVID-19 data was obtained from the [Marshall Project tracker](#).

Notes:

This toolkit includes information about various local campaigns in different states across the country and will be continually updated. If you have state-specific information to add to the toolkit, or if your group is sponsoring a campaign for emergency releases (or a similar campaign) that you would like for us to include, please contact us at mourningourlosses@gmail.com.

Prison Policy Initiative, Brennan Center for Justice, UCLA Law COVID-19 Behind Bars Data Project, Worth Rises, Community Justice Exchange, Promise of Justice Initiative, Defender Impact Initiative, Root & Rebound, Yale Justice Collaboratory, and others support the general messaging and advocacy goals of this toolkit.

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Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, incarcerated people have endured horrifying, inhumane conditions. Bearing a disproportionate burden of the pandemic's fatalities, they have been [four times more likely to contract the virus](#) and [twice as likely to die](#) from it compared to the general public. State leaders have produced these outbreaks by knowingly transferring infected people between facilities and refusing to provide adequate testing or medical care. They have kept incarcerated people and their families in the dark, in some cases even neglecting to let them know about loved ones' deaths. Perhaps worst of all, state leaders have **refused to meaningfully reduce their state prison populations**. Across the country, they have ignored applications for clemency, medical parole, and compassionate release that would save the lives of the most vulnerable. The releases that Governors have ordered mostly have been limited mechanisms that apply only to those convicted of "non-violent" crimes who were nearing the end of their sentences.

The pandemic has revealed the need for permanent and complete decarceration. More than 2,600 incarcerated people and 240 correctional employees have died from the virus. These deaths were preventable and have left countless loved ones in mourning. State leaders should do everything in their power to release all incarcerated people from prison, starting with those who are medically vulnerable or have already served most of their sentence — regardless of crime or conviction.

Now, when states have begun to execute their **COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans**, we have seen mixed results. Some states are following the [recommendations of public health experts](#) by guaranteeing **early & ongoing access** to the vaccine for incarcerated people. This commitment is not only a **sensible public health decision** but also a moral one given that states have insisted on keeping so many people in their custody in tortuous breeding grounds for the virus. However, **many states have not guaranteed early access for incarcerated people in their vaccine distribution plans**. In a cowardly turn emblematic of failures of leadership across the country, [Colorado Governor Jared Polis caved to political pressure](#) and deprioritized incarcerated people from the state's distribution plan, defying his state's department of public health. This incident reflects the precarity of incarcerated people's access to the vaccine in state plans, and the necessity of pressuring our leaders to secure even the most basic protections for incarcerated people.

Every Governor's response to COVID-19 in prisons has been a failure. Nine months into this pandemic, incarcerated people are still getting sick and dying at record rates. We need you to take action to hold your Governor accountable and make sure he or she grants emergency releases and guarantees early & ongoing vaccine access for incarcerated people. **Click on your state's name below** for an overview of COVID-19 in your state's prisons, phone and email scripts, sample Tweets, and information about any active campaigns and advocacy groups in your state. We encourage you to adapt the guides to fit your advocacy goals and beliefs. **Scroll down** for [donation suggestions](#), [additional information](#) about vaccination plans and COVID-19 in prisons, and [shareable graphics](#).

Take Action in Your State

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Donate to support incarcerated & formerly incarcerated people

- **[National Bail Fund Network](#)**: A regularly-updated listing of more than 80 community bail and bond funds across the country that are freeing people by paying bail/bond while also fighting to abolish the money bail and pretrial detention systems. [Donate to the COVID-19 Emergency Bail Fund here](#).
- **[@prisonculture's Redistribution Fund](#)**: A mutual aid pool for abolitionist Mariame Kaba to donate funds to mutual aid projects across the country that need support.
- **[The Canteen Project](#)**: A page to facilitate donations, 100% of which go to incarcerated individuals to help in purchasing goods at the canteen/commissary. This includes hygiene supplies and food items such as rice, beans, and pouch foods to avoid eating food from the kitchen (a transmission vector for COVID-19).
- **[A.B.O. Comix](#)**: An abolitionist collective of artists and creators. You can buy books and zines, artwork and prints, and apparel and accessories to support incarcerated LGBTQ artists and amplify their voices.
- **[Formerly Incarcerated Convicted People and Families Movement \(FICPFM\)](#)**: A network of over 50 civil and human rights organizations led by people who have conviction histories and their family members. [Donate to FICPFM here](#) or find a local organization in your state on FICPFM's [National Network page](#).
- **[The Million Book Project](#)**: Conceptualized by poet and legal scholar Reginald Dwayne Betts, this project will bring curated 500-book literary time-capsules to 1,000 prisons and juvenile detention centers to each state in the United States, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. [Donate to The Million Book Project here](#).
- **[National Council for Incarcerated & Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls](#)**: An organization led by formerly incarcerated women committed to abolishing incarceration for women and girls. [Donate to the National Council here](#).
- **[Prison Journalism Project](#)**: An organization that provides a platform for incarcerated writers and communities affected by incarceration to tell stories about their world using the tools of journalism. [Donate to the Prison Journalism Project here](#).
- **[Survived & Punished](#)**: A national coalition composed of survivors, organizers, currently and formerly incarcerated people, and others that organizes to de-criminalize efforts to survive domestic and sexual violence, support and free criminalized survivors, and abolish gender violence, policing, prisons, and deportations. [Donate to Survived & Punished here](#).

Want to learn more?

COVID-19 in prisons

- Mourning Our Losses, [A space to honor and remember those who died](#) while living or working behind bars during the COVID-19 pandemic
- *The Marshall Project*, [A State-by-State Look at Coronavirus in Prisons](#)
- UCLA Law, [COVID-19 Behind Bars Data Project](#) collecting facility-level data in each state and up-to-date information about releases and advocacy
- [COVID Prison Project](#) collecting state-level data on COVID in correctional facilities around the country
- National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice, [Report about COVID-19 in U.S. State and Federal Prisons](#) (December 2020 update)
- Prison Journalism Project, ["Negligent and Deadly"](#) essay by Anthony Ehlers about the spread of COVID-19 in his Illinois state prison (January 2021)

- Prison Policy Initiative, [Report on Mass Incarceration, COVID-19, and Community Spread](#) (December 2020)
- COVID, Corrections, and Oversight Project, [A Profile of COVID Deaths in Custody in Texas](#) (November 2020)
- National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice, [Report analyzing the handling of COVID-19 by the criminal justice system](#) (12/9/2020)
- Journal of the American Medical Association: [COVID-19, Decarceration, and the Role of Clinicians, Health Systems, and Payers](#) (December 2020)
- Dr. Emily Wang, The National Academies Press: [Decarcerating Correctional Facilities during COVID-19 summary](#) (full report [here](#)) (October 2020)

COVID-19 vaccination plans & prisons

- American Medical Association, [A call for more COVID-19 prevention for congregate settings](#) (11/17/2020)
- National Academy for State Health Policy, [Vaccination Plans by State](#) (12/10/2020)
- Prison Policy Initiative, [Report on where incarcerated people stand in states' vaccination plans](#) (12/8/2020)
- The COVID Prison Project, [An Analysis of Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plans](#) (12/15/2020)
- *The Washington Post*, [Op-ed by Christopher Blackwell](#) explaining the need for early access to the vaccine for people in prisons like his (12/11/2020)
- *Mother Jones*, [Article addressing the political backlash](#) to early access to the vaccine for incarcerated people (12/4/2020)
- Group of national experts on health & justice, [White paper on prioritization and distribution of COVID-19 vaccine in prisons and jails](#) (12/16/2020)

Health, public health, and prisons

- *The Progressive*, [The Graying of Mass Incarceration](#) by Victoria Law (12/3/2020)
- *The Marshall Project*, [Article on the aging prison population](#) (3/19/2020)
- The Commonwealth Fund, [Report on Medicaid's Evolving Role in Advancing the Health of People Involved in the Justice System](#) (November 2020)
- National Center for Biotechnology Information, [Report on Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in Incarcerated Populations](#) (2012)

Shareable Graphics

Thank you for sharing this toolkit. When posting on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, please use the hashtag [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#) and tag Mourning Our Losses ([@mourninglosses](#) on Twitter, [@mourningourlosses](#) on Instagram, and [Mourning Our Losses](#) on Facebook).

Prepared graphics can be found at [this link](#).

[Learn how to Take Action in Your State](#)

Alabama

Last updated: March 21, 2021

In Alabama state prisons, more than 1,500 people have tested positive, and at least 63 of those that contracted the virus have died. As of March 2021, Alabama state prisons had the tenth highest death toll among incarcerated people of any prison system. In addition to those who are incarcerated, more than a thousand employees in Alabama prisons have tested positive for the virus, including 3 who have died. As reflected in the numbers, there is an enormous disparity between the COVID-19 death rates of prison staff and incarcerated people. Although prison residents and employees alike have been [provided with and required to wear masks](#), the overcrowded dormitories offer little protection from the virus for incarcerated people. Earlier in the year, the Alabama DOC (ADOC) announced that it would begin an automated process of early release for incarcerated people convicted of non-violent offenses, but a spokeswoman for [the ADOC stated](#) that this was in no way related to the pandemic. According to the UCLA Law COVID-19 Behind Bars Data Project, only three jails in the state have reduced their populations during the pandemic, and no one has been released from Alabama prisons due to COVID-19. Furthermore, those who have been released often have lacked the re-entry services necessary to survive; according to [Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice](#), people positive for COVID-19 have been released directly into homelessness. ADOC Commissioner Jeff Dunn [explicitly stated](#), "My biggest concern is the virus among our employee population," and therefore he has taken no meaningful action to protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. According to the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), incarcerated people in Alabama will be receiving access to the vaccine during Phase 2 of distribution.

Call Governor Ivey at (334) 242-7100

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Alabama has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Ivey to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Ivey at <https://contact.governor.alabama.gov/contact.aspx>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Ivey,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Alabama has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. With at least 63 deaths, people incarcerated in Alabama are dying from COVID-19 at twice the rate of other Alabamans. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Alabamians.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Ivey @GovernorKayIvey

People incarcerated in Alabama are dying from COVID-19 at twice the rate of other Alabamians. [@GovernorKayIvey](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Tell Gov. Ivey: No New Prisons in Alabama](#): Governor Ivey is planning to give \$2.6 billion to private prison companies to build three new mega-prisons, which the state would be obligated to lease for 30 years. Join the Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice in [sending letters](#) to Gov. Ivey and other state leaders demanding real solutions, not bigger prisons.
- [Tuscaloosa Action](#) and [Ttown Freedom Marches](#) have jointly organized protests of jail conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tuscaloosa Action “promotes progressive action and causes in Tuscaloosa and West Alabama.” Ttown Freedom Marchers “seeks to let the world know that Tuscaloosa not only cares but wants to bring awareness to the injustices the African American community faces.”

Alaska

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Although the Alaska prison system managed to avoid major COVID-19 outbreaks for the first several months of the pandemic, there has been a dramatic spike in cases in recent months, with the overwhelming majority of overall cases among incarcerated people reported in November and December 2020. This increase originated largely from [outbreaks](#) at Fairbanks Correctional Center and Goose Creek Correctional Center — at the latter, which is Alaska’s largest prison, [more than 90%](#) of the residents had tested positive for the virus in January 2021. There have been at least [2,382 positive cases](#) among incarcerated people in the state, including at least [5 deaths](#). As of January 2021, data showed that Alaska’s rate of COVID-19 infections per 10,000 incarcerated people is 483% higher than the state’s overall rate. Alaska’s Department of Corrections initially took the pandemic more seriously than other states, drafting a [preparedness and prevention plan](#) in March

of 2020 and testing every incarcerated person in the state multiple times beginning on February 2, 2020, even those who were asymptomatic. However, both Governor Dunleavy and the Alaska DOC Commissioner Nancy Dahlstrom [said](#) early in the pandemic that the early release of incarcerated people to improve safety during the pandemic was not an option, and they have stuck to this approach despite overcrowding in the state's prisons. The state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) does not specify the phase in which the vaccine will be made available to incarcerated people or correctional staff. The ACLU of Alaska wrote a [letter](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services on December 22 encouraging the agency to slot incarcerated people into an early phase for vaccine access, but a final decision has not yet been announced.

Call Governor Mike Dunleavy at (907) 465-3500

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Alaska has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Dunleavy to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Governor Dunleavy must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Dunleavy at

<https://aws.state.ak.us/CrmForms/Home/Feedback>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Alaska has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. Recent outbreaks have devastated Alaska's prisons and jails, including in Goose Creek Correctional Center. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Alaska vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Alaska prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Alaska residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Dunleavy @GovDunleavy

More than 90% of those incarcerated at Goose Creek prison tested positive for COVID-19 in January. @GovDunleavy must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Alaska residents are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @GovDunleavy must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of Alaska's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Arizona

Last updated: March 21, 2021

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR) has administered [tens of thousands of COVID-19 tests](#) — enough to test every person incarcerated in the state at least once. However, [people inside Yuma's prisons](#) have reported that staff often deny people access to testing, even if they exhibit symptoms. More than 12,000 incarcerated Arizona residents have tested positive for COVID-19. There have been 51 deaths of incarcerated people in Arizona attributed to the virus. Many [occurred in the late spring and summer](#) of 2020 when the state saw an overall surge in cases. Arizona's outbreaks are ongoing, exacerbated by avoidable spreading; at the Santa Rita Unit, mask mandates are routinely ignored by prison officials and correctional employees come to work sick, often resulting in entire dorms being "quarantined" in incredibly close quarters with continued exposure to COVID-19 in the facility. The ADCRR has not done nearly everything in its power to keep safe the people inside. Arizona has the [fifth highest incarceration rate in the country](#), yet Governor Ducey still firmly believes that COVID-19 is no reason to release people early. Accordingly, [Middle Ground Prison Reform](#) has reported that not a single person was released early due to COVID-19 in all of 2020. The ADCRR suspended all in-person visits but ignores large disparities in safety on the inside: staff members have access to full PPE that includes N-95 masks, gowns, gloves, and face shields, while incarcerated people [received only fabric face coverings](#). In fact, incarcerated people in Arizona were put to work to make face coverings for prison staff at the beginning of April but did not have access to their own [until July 2nd](#). Like many other states, Arizona intends to vaccinate its incarcerated population during Phase 2 of its [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Doug Ducey at (602) 542-4331

Hello, my name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am calling because Arizona has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Ducey to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting compassionate release to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and approving clemencies recommended to him by the Arizona Board of Executive Clemencies. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Ducey at

<https://azgovernor.gov/engage/form/contact-governor-ducey>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Ducey,

My name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am writing because Arizona has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 12,000 incarcerated people have tested positive for the virus so far, and at least 51 have died. And while incarcerated people in Arizona were put to work to make face coverings for prison staff at the beginning of April, they did not have access to their own until July 2nd. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting compassionate release to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and approving clemencies recommended to you by the Arizona Board of Executive Clemencies.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Arizona residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Ducey @dougducey

At least 51 people incarcerated in Arizona have died from COVID-19. @dougducey must grant compassionate release to medically vulnerable people and approve clemencies for people recommended by the AZ Clemency Board.
#FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated people in Arizona began making face coverings for prison staff in early April, but couldn't access their own masks until July. @dougducey must act to protect people incarcerated and reduce the prison population.
#FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Puente Human Rights Movement](#) has launched the Comply and Release campaign to end medical neglect in Arizona's prison, jails, and detention centers. From their organizers: "The Comply and Release campaign is the culmination of last year's work from our #FreeThemAll campaign. The state of Arizona has an obsession with incarcerating and caging its people instead of providing proper social care, medical assistance or rehabilitation to our loved ones. Arizona jails, prisons, and detention centers have a dark history of medical neglect, unknown causes of death, and human rights abuses." To learn more about their campaign please visit: puenteaz.org/humanrightsreport.
- [Middle Ground Prison Reform](#) is an Arizona-based advocacy organization that engages in public education and legislative advocacy about issues affecting incarcerated people. They compiled this [list of criminal justice-related bills](#) that have been introduced in the Arizona State Legislature, along with suggested positions. In particular, Middle Ground encourages people to call and email AZ legislators in support of HB 2713, which will help people incarcerated for drug crimes or other nonviolent charges to be released early. The bill is scheduled for a hearing before the House Criminal Justice Committee on Wednesday, February 3 at 2pm MST.
- [Mass Liberation AZ](#): Sign this [petition](#) calling to decarcerate Arizona prisons and jails and provide adequate hygiene supplies and health care within remaining facilities.

Arkansas

Last updated: March 21, 2021

As of March 2021, the Arkansas prison system had the fifth highest rate per capita of COVID-19 deaths of any prison system in the country. More than 11,000 total cases have been reported among people incarcerated. Governor Asa Hutchinson has [attributed this high infection rate](#) to an aggressive testing program that includes people who are asymptomatic. This program had [administered 63,137 tests](#) to people in custody and DOC staff as of March 2021. If this number were of incarcerated individuals alone, it would be enough to test each incarcerated person in the state only four times over the past year. At least 52 incarcerated people have died in state prisons. Governor Hutchinson and the Arkansas Department of Corrections have made efforts to depopulate the state's prisons due to the pandemic. On April 20, 2020 the Governor [issued a directive](#) ordering the release of incarcerated people to improve the COVID-19 crisis behind bars. Over 1,200 people incarcerated for "[nonviolent and nonsexual crimes](#)" were made eligible for early parole, and hundreds have already been released. Due to COVID-19-related early releases, the Arkansas state prison system has been [below capacity for the first time in over a decade](#). Despite this system-wide statistic, however, several of the largest prisons in the state remain overcrowded, and the Governor's directive also does nothing to explicitly protect those most medically vulnerable to the virus. Those incarcerated in Arkansas may have to wait several more months for alleviation, as the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) implies that they will receive vaccine access in Phase 2, even while correctional staff are set to receive vaccine access in Phase 1B.

Call Governor Asa Hutchinson at (501) 682-2345

Hello, my name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am calling because Arkansas has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Hutchinson to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Hutchinson at

<https://governor.arkansas.gov/online-services/contact-us/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Hutchinson,

My name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am writing because Arkansas has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. The Arkansas prison system has the second highest rate per capita of COVID-19 infections in the country, just recently having fallen down from the number one spot, and the highest per capita rate of deaths due to COVID-19 in the country. More than 11,000 total cases have been reported behind bars, and at least 52 people have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Arkansas residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Hutchinson @AsaHutchinson

Arkansas has the fifth highest rate of COVID deaths behind bars in the country.
@AsaHutchinson must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and

those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

2 in 3 people incarcerated in Arkansas have tested positive for COVID-19, and at least 52 people have died. [@AsaHutchinson](#) must grant emergency releases to drastically reduce the prison population and prevent even more avoidable deaths. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Follow Proven Reverse Recidivism](#), a nonprofit that has organized the loved ones of people incarcerated at Cummins Unit to protest inhumane conditions, including authorities' failure to control the spread of COVID-19 behind bars.

California

Last updated: March 27, 2021

There have been more than [49,000 confirmed cases](#) of COVID-19 among Californians incarcerated in state prisons, the highest case count in any state. The number of cases has resulted in the highest death toll from COVID-19 in any state prison system; at least 216 people incarcerated in the system have died. These include 28 people who died at San Quentin State Prison after [transfers](#) this summer led to one of the worst outbreaks in the nation. A February 2021 report by the state Office of the Inspector General revealed that the transfer was made over the objections of medical staff at facilities. As the [#StopSanQuentinOutbreak](#) coalition has urged: "This report once again makes clear that CDCR cannot safely house and provide medical care for those in its custody." Although state prison populations have been reduced by over 22,000 people since March, the system remains at over 100% capacity, and [medical experts have urged](#) that more dramatic decarceration is needed. Serious outbreaks also continue at county jails, including the [Fresno Jail](#), [Santa Rita County Jail](#), San Diego Jails, and Sacramento Jails, [among many others](#). California plans to offer vaccine access to its incarcerated population during either Phase 1 or 2 of its [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), while correctional employees will likely receive access in Phase 1.

Call Governor Gavin Newsom at (916) 445-2841

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because California has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Newsom to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population to below 50% capacity, following the recommendations of public health experts at Amend. Instead of involuntarily transferring people between facilities, the Governor must reunite them with their families and communities. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Newsom at <https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov40mail/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Newsom,

My name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am writing because California has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. California prisons continue to be the top U.S. rankings for prison hotspots, and the virus has killed at least 216 incarcerated people. In San Quentin, where a gruesome outbreak has resulted in the deaths of at least 28 incarcerated people. Involuntary transfers remain ongoing. I urge Governor Newsom to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population to below 50% capacity, following the recommendations of public health experts at Amend.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all California residents.

Thank you,
[\[your name\]](#)

Tweet at Governor Newsom @GavinNewsom

The OIG report shows that CDCr cannot safely house and provide medical care for those in its custody. [@GavinNewsom](#) must reduce the prison population to below 50% capacity, following the recommendations of public health experts at Amend. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#) [#StopCDCrOutbreak](#)

COVID-19 has now killed at least 216 incarcerated people. [@GavinNewsom](#), please do more to protect incarcerated people. A change has to come - it's time to start letting people go. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [#StopSanQuentinOutbreak](#) and [#StopCDCrOutbreak](#) coalitions are made up of formerly incarcerated people, loved ones with direct connections to California state prisons, community organizers, and currently incarcerated folks actively raising awareness about the spread of COVID-19 in state prisons. Visit their [webpage](#) to learn more, and to listen to [testimonials from people inside](#). To take action, use their [#ReleasesNow](#) [toolkit](#), which includes sample social media posts and phone scripts.
 - Read [the Coalition's statement](#) in response to the Office of the Inspector General's February 2021 report investigating the decisions behind the San Quentin outbreak.
- [Re:Store Justice](#) is an advocacy group working to end life and extreme sentences by changing the way society and the legal system respond to violence. They offer [resources for people incarcerated and their loved ones](#) during this pandemic including a [guide to rights](#) of

incarcerated people and their families when they are hospitalized. Join [their advocacy group](#) to fight for people incarcerated in California.

- **[The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights](#)** works locally, statewide, and nationally to shift resources away from prisons and punishment and towards opportunities that make our communities safe, healthy, and strong. Join them as they fight to [repeal sentencing enhancements and enact sentencing reform](#), and use their [guide to resentencing](#).
- **[Care not Cages](#)**: Sign petitions to support the release of medically vulnerable and elderly members of California Coalition for Women's Prisoners LA. To urge Governor Newsom to grant more clemencies, find action items and sample social media posts on CCWP's [#NoMoreDeaths toolkit](#).
- **[F.U.E.L. Families United to End LWOP](#)**: Join the loved ones of people currently incarcerated in fighting to end life without parole and raise awareness of the cruel, slow death of this sentence.
- **[Survived & Punished CA](#)**: Take action in three steps to urge Governor Newsom to decriminalize survival and commute the sentences of all survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Also sign [this petition](#) to drop life without parole from California's criminal code.
- **[Confined During COVID-19: How to Help](#)**: Explore [this resource page](#) created by UC-Irvine's Confined During COVID-19 project to find advocacy guides and donation suggestions to support incarcerated people during the pandemic.
- **[Resources by UnCommon Law](#)**: UnCommon Law's [COVID-19 webpage](#) includes updates about COVID-19 in California prisons; resources for incarcerated people, loved ones, and advocates; and an overview of the organization's robust COVID-19 response.
- **[Santa Rita Jail COVID-19 Data](#)**: Activist [Darby Aono's](#) tracker of the jail's population, COVID-19 cases, and testing.
- **[Amend](#)**, an organization of public health experts affiliated with UCSF, has created a series of tools and graphics [explaining the COVID-19 vaccine](#) for people incarcerated and correctional staff, as well as tools for [seeking or supporting efforts for compassionate release](#).

Colorado

Last updated: March 21, 2021

In the Colorado state prison system, at least [8,742](#) incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19, and at least 29 have died. The majority of the positive cases occurred in November and December — jails and prisons made up 8 of the state's 10 largest active outbreaks in those months. Due to this recent spike in cases, there have been extended lockdowns in Colorado prisons which have bred tenuous conditions. Incarcerated people have received substandard meals, they do not have access to showers for days on end, and they sometimes go for weeks [without stepping outside](#). On March 26, 2020, Governor Jared Polis issued an [executive order](#) that incarcerated individuals within 180 days of parole eligibility should be released. Since then, hundreds of people have been released early, although the executive order did nothing to facilitate the release of particularly medically-vulnerable people. [This trend of releases, coupled with policy changes](#), was intended to accomplish an overall goal of 3,500 releases. As a result, vacancy rates in Colorado prisons have

increased steadily over the past several months. In late December, the men's state prison population was down 25.6% and the women's state prison population was [down approximately 35.7%](#) from pre-pandemic levels. Since this decrease has been caused by COVID-19 releases, however, it may not last. The ACLU of Colorado has filed several lawsuits against the state and the DOC in an attempt to achieve much more dramatic and long-lasting decarceration. [The ACLU filed a lawsuit](#) in early December requesting a temporary restraining order against Governor Polis in hopes that a judge will force him to reduce prison populations. Although Colorado's [original Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) included incarcerated people prioritized in Phase 2A, in early December Governor Polis caved to political pressure from a conservative prosecutor and [deprioritized](#) incarcerated people for vaccine access. In Colorado's [updated Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), incarcerated people will instead receive vaccine access with the general population instead, in order of age and vulnerability.

Call Governor Jared Polis at (303) 866-2471

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Colorado has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and also is not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Polis to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Colorado's plan originally recognized this need for vaccine prioritization, but Governor Polis was wrongfully swayed by political backlash and has unjustly deprioritized incarcerated people for vaccine access. Governor Polis must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Polis at governorpolis@state.co.us

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Polis,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Colorado has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. At least 8,742 incarcerated people have tested positive for the virus, at least 29 of whom have died. Current outbreaks are continuing largely unchecked and are contributing significantly to Colorado's overall COVID-19 crisis. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Colorado vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic. Colorado originally recognized the logic of this decision, but I was angry to learn that you changed the plan to deprioritize access to the vaccine for incarcerated people in the wake of political backlash. This should not be a political issue — the people you have chosen to keep in your custody are getting sick and dying and must be protected.

Releasing people from Colorado prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities (and even constituted 8 out of Colorado's top 10 virus hotspots in December), it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Colorado residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Polis @GovofCO

In December, Colorado's jails and prisons were among the state's largest COVID-19 outbreaks. @GovofCO must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Coloradoans are among those most vulnerable to COVID-19. @GovofCO must stop playing political games and must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of Colorado's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

In the face of political backlash from a conservative prosecutor, @GovofCO deprioritized incarcerated people from Colorado's vaccine distribution plan. This decision will lead more of the most vulnerable to die behind bars. It must be reversed. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **[Urge Governor Polis to use his clemency powers:](#)** Join members of the [Denver Broncos](#) and the Colorado ACLU to urge the governor to safely release people from prison.
- **[Colorado Prison Wives/GF](#)** has held protests in support of their loved ones inside Colorado state prisons during the coronavirus. Loved ones of incarcerated people in Colorado state prisons can join their activism by joining their [Facebook group](#).

Connecticut

Last updated: March 24, 2021

There have been at least 4,249 reported cases of COVID-19 among people incarcerated in Connecticut, and at least 19 deaths. As of December 2020, the prison population had been reduced by between [2,000](#) and [3,000 people](#) from a pre-pandemic prison population of 12,400. The 560 people freed under [discretionary release](#) included those who had a short time left on their sentences, those convicted of non-violent crimes, people over 60, and people with high-risk medical conditions. However, the *CT Mirror* [reported](#) on November 30 that the Governor had not issued a single commutation of a sentence since the pandemic began, and that, while Connecticut had reached a record-low prison population, that milestone was due largely to “a huge reduction in people going in the front door; not a mass exodus from the back.” The ACLU of Connecticut [sued the state twice](#) for its handling of COVID-19 in prisons. The ACLU reached a [settlement agreement](#) with the DOC over the summer which required that the DOC prioritize elderly and medically-vulnerable people for release; distribute cleaning supplies, soap, and PPE to incarcerated people; and stop imposing punitive measures on those who have tested positive. However, advocates have since expressed concern about [“systemic patterns of non-compliance”](#) by the prisons. Connecticut prisons are still plagued by the virus, with [outbreaks](#) active and ongoing in the Cheshire, Osborn, and York Correctional Institutions. Both incarcerated people and correctional employees are slated to receive the vaccine in Phase 1b of Connecticut’s [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#). After Governor Lamont’s press conference on vaccine distribution, the ACLU has continued to push for incarcerated people 65 and older and those with medical conditions to be part of Phase 1a. According to the ACLU, there are [less than 250 people in the former category](#).

Call Governor Ned Lamont at (860) 566-4840

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Connecticut has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Lamont to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly “chains of transmission,” bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Lamont at

<https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/Contact/Email-Governor-Lamont>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Lamont,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Connecticut has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. Though the prison population has decreased over the course of the pandemic, you have not granted a single commutation to any of the medically vulnerable people locked in prisons across the state. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to

medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Connecticut residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Lamont @GovNedLamont

@GovNedLamont has not granted a single commutation during the pandemic. He must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **#FreeThemNowCT:** Join the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice to [email and tweet at](#) Governor Lamont and your state representatives to pass legislation during the next special legislative session. The proposed legislation will lead to the immediate release of as many people incarcerated across the state's jails and prisons as possible in light of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Delaware

Last updated: March 24, 2021

There have been at least 2,012 reported COVID-19 cases among incarcerated people in Delaware, including at least 13 deaths. [According to advocates](#), people incarcerated in Delaware are dying from COVID-19 at a rate that is third in the nation. A 10% decrease in the prison population since the pandemic began has been driven primarily by a decrease in the pre-trial detention [population](#) — in other words, a decrease in intakes into custody due largely to court closures. Governor Carney has refused to release people already incarcerated when the pandemic began, despite calls to do so from advocates like those at the ACLU of Delaware. Both the Governor and the state DOC Commissioner have stated that they do not believe any releases are [“necessary.”](#) However, there have been substantial COVID-19 outbreaks in Delaware prisons, including an outbreak over the summer at Sussex Correctional Institution where one in three incarcerated people [tested positive](#) for the virus. The month of December brought [the biggest outbreak](#) to Delaware's prison system since the start of the pandemic. [In early December](#), 93% of the state's active cases were in James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna and Howard R. Young Correctional Institution in Wilmington. There were also three cases at Sussex Correctional Institution in Georgetown. In October, 67 incarcerated people filed a [federal class-action lawsuit](#) for \$400 million against the state of Delaware for failing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in state prisons. The watchdog group Citizens for a Pro-Business Delaware (CPBD) condemned Carney and the DOC for [“mismanagement”](#) of the situation, including failing to provide PPE to incarcerated people. CPBD had offered its organization's own supply of masks to the DOC to ensure that all incarcerated people could receive masks, but its donation was

denied. Both incarcerated people and correctional employees are slated to receive access to the vaccine in Phase 1C of the state's [vaccine distribution plan](#).

Call Governor John Carney at (302) 744-4101

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Delaware has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Carney to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Carney at

<https://governor.delaware.gov/email-governor-carney/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Carney,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Delaware has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. Though the prison population has decreased over the course of the pandemic, you have refused to release people who are currently imprisoned. Now, more than 2,012 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 13 have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Delaware residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Carney @JohnCarneyDE

Incarcerated people are dying in Delaware because of COVID-19. [@JohnCarneyDE](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left.
[#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

District of Columbia

Last updated: March 24, 2021

Washington, DC is a unique jurisdiction in that it does not have its own adult prison; all incarcerated DC residents not housed in the DC Jail or one of the city's two juvenile facilities are sent to federal prisons around the country. Like jails around the country, the DC Jail's revolving door nature and poor sanitary conditions resulted in a massive COVID-19 outbreak infecting [more than half of its residents](#) and killing one person during the first two months of the pandemic. Additionally, at the end of December, both of DC's [juvenile facilities](#) were experiencing resident and staff COVID-19 cases in unprecedented numbers, forcing many youth to go into solitary quarantine. The federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), which houses most incarcerated DC residents, has been hit particularly hard by COVID-19, with at least 49,324 positive cases and 240 deaths among people incarcerated in its facilities due to the virus. Early outbreaks and horrible conditions revealed that the BOP's COVID-19 was woefully inadequate; [according to The Marshall Project](#), federal prisons were "coronavirus death traps." And while DC residents can be incarcerated in any federal facility in the country, approximately [85%](#) of them reside in facilities within 500 miles of DC. That radius includes facilities like Butner Correctional Institution in North Carolina, where COVID-19 [decimated](#) the incarcerated population and killed 29 residents. The DC Council attempted to protect the incarcerated DC residents most vulnerable to COVID-19 by [expanding eligibility for compassionate release](#) in April 2020 to allow for applications by incarcerated people who are over the age of 60 and who have high-risk medical conditions. The amendment also required, however, that an applicant "[h]as served at least 20 years in prison or has served the greater of 10 years or 75% of his or her sentence" and included a host of other required considerations (many of them related to the nature of the crime of conviction), therein excluding many incarcerated DC residents at heightened risk for complications from COVID-19. As of December 30, the DC Superior Court [reported](#) that 481 applications had been filed, 243 of them had been reviewed, and only 1/3 of those reviewed had been granted. The most frequent reason for denial was concern over public safety. As a result, the promising new policy adopted in April has brought about fewer than 100 early releases. While the BOP has [announced](#) its plans to use its initial vaccine doses on staff (a decision out of the control of the DC Government), DC's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), which likely will apply to those at the DC Jail and DC's juvenile facilities, guarantees access to the vaccine to both incarcerated people and correctional staff in Phase 2 of distribution.

Call Mayor Muriel Bowser at (202) 727-2643

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in Washington, DC. I am calling because the District has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Mayor Bowser to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the population of DC residents incarcerated in local and federal facilities by removing the time-served requirements for compassionate release eligibility under §24-403.04 (3B). Mayor Bowser must also reduce the DC Jail population by granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people, releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left, and releasing all those who have not yet been convicted. This will not only stem

the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Mayor Bowser at eom@dc.gov

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Mayor Bowser,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in Washington, DC. I am writing because the District has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. DC residents incarcerated in federal prisons have borne witness to gruesome outbreaks and inadequate protection during the pandemic with minimal contact with their communities in DC. Locally, one-half of the residents in the DC Jail tested positive for the virus in the first two months of the pandemic, and outbreaks are now plaguing DC's juvenile facilities. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the population of DC residents incarcerated in local and federal facilities. Necessary measures include removing the time-served requirements for compassionate release eligibility under §24-403.04 (3B); reducing the other factors that are required to be considered in compassionate release cases; and reducing the DC Jail population by granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people, releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left, and releasing all those who have not yet been convicted.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have served decades behind bars or those who have committed "nonviolent" crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people whose sentences are incompatible with DC's compassionate release requirements but do not pose any threat to society—they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within federal prisons and the DC Jail, but since jails and prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Washingtonians.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Mayor Bowser @MayorBowser

DC's April 2020 law to expand compassionate release eligibility has resulted in fewer than 100 releases. [@MayorBowser](#) must remove time-served requirements and other unnecessary provisions from DC's law to protect those most vulnerable to COVID-19. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

DC incarcerated residents live in federal prisons, where COVID-19 has been uncontrollable. [@MayorBowser](#) must grant emergency releases to medically

vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Support DC Citizens Returning Home](#): Support DC residents returning home from incarcerated during the pandemic by donating what you can to [this fundraiser](#) managed by [Georgetown Defenders](#), a student organization of aspiring public defenders at Georgetown Law School.
- [COVID-Related Compassionate Release](#): If your loved one was sentenced in DC Superior Court and is terminally ill, profoundly debilitated, or has a preexisting health condition that makes them vulnerable to COVID-19, please fill this form prepared by Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM) and you may be able to be connected with a pro bono lawyer.
- [No New Jails D.C.](#) has held protests during the pandemic in solidarity with people incarcerated in D.C. jails. Follow them on [Twitter](#) and [sign their petition](#) against new jails in D.C.

Florida

Last updated: March 24, 2021

With at least 17,930 cases and at least 213 deaths, Florida ranks second among states in the U.S. for total COVID-19 deaths among incarcerated people. As of January 2021, the number of deaths in the state's prison system was almost as high as the number of deaths in the entire federal prison system, which houses nearly twice as many people. The infection rate among incarcerated people in Florida is [440% higher](#) than the infection rate for the state's general population. While [a few counties](#) released people incarcerated for non-violent offenses, the Governor has [refused](#) to release people due to COVID-19 at a state level, despite pleas from advocates. Moreover, the state Commission on Offender Review [denied the majority](#) of "conditional medical release" requests from incarcerated people who were terminally ill or permanently disabled. As of late December, Florida prisons were dealing with two new COVID-19 outbreaks at Lawtey and Zephyrhill Correctional Institutions, yet the state Department of Corrections [removed much of its public](#) information about the pandemic right when the outbreaks began, drawing concern from public health advocates. Florida has not included incarcerated people or correctional staff in their [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Ron DeSantis at (850) 717-9337

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because Florida has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor DeSantis to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Governor DeSantis must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical

expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor DeSantis at <https://www.flgov.com/email-the-governor/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor DeSantis,

My name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am writing because Florida has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. Florida leads the nation for the number of incarcerated people who have died during the pandemic. At least 213 people have died in state prisons because of your inaction. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Florida vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Florida prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Floridians.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor DeSantis @RonDeSantisFL

Florida leads the nation for the number of incarcerated people who have died from COVID. @RonDeSantisFL must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Floridians are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. At least 213 people have died. @RonDeSantisFL must guarantee

incarcerated people early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 to avoid even more preventable deaths. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **[Take Action with the Southern Poverty Law Center](#):** Demand humanitarian release for people in Florida's jails and prisons using this [online form](#).
- **[Friends of Miami Dade Detainees](#):** Join the friends of the Miami Dade detainees to demonstrate against the conditions of ICE detention in Miami. Follow them on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).
- **[Florida Prisoner Solidarity](#):** FPS has held protests against conditions inside during the pandemic. They organize with people on the inside to end all forms of incarceration. Follow them on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

Georgia

Last updated: March 26, 2021

There have been at least 3,674 reported COVID-19 cases and 93 deaths among incarcerated people in Georgia, landing Georgia in the top seven states for COVID-19 deaths among incarcerated people. The Southern Center for Human Rights has called the situation inside Georgia's prisons a "[humanitarian crisis](#)," spurring 17 members of the Georgia House Democratic Caucus to request that the state Corrections Commissioner order a Department of Justice investigation of the prison system. The Georgia Parole Board has operated in business-as-usual fashion throughout the pandemic. In April and May it claimed that the releases of fewer than 1,000 people convicted of "low-level offenses" already approaching the end of their sentences were related to the pandemic. And, if [DOC reports](#) give any indication, the overall 1% decrease of the state's prison population from January to August can likely be most attributed to counties' reduced transfers of people from jails to prison — a reality despite the fact that the DOC itself has continued regular transfers between state facilities since June. Advocates continue to call for reductions. Georgia's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes incarcerated people in Phase 2 and leaves ambiguous the placement of correctional employees, but a [press release](#) by the Georgia Department of Public Health clarifies that those employees will be included in Phase 1-B of Georgia's vaccine distribution.

Note: We are asking that you direct your advocacy efforts towards the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles, rather than Governor Brian Kemp, because the Parole Board holds nearly exclusive power over state prison releases.

Call the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles at (404) 657-9450

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Georgia has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge the Parole Board to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of

transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email the Georgia Parole Board at webmaster@pap.ga.gov

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Members of the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Georgia has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Georgia residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at the Georgia Parole Board @GA_ParoleBoard

At least 93 incarcerated people in Georgia have died from COVID-19. [@GA_ParoleBoard](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **[Take Action with the Southern Center for Human Rights](#):** Join SCHR's campaigns against mass incarceration in Georgia. Fight for an end to extreme sentencing, for adoption of alternatives to incarceration, and for an end to inhumane prison and jail conditions.
- **[Tear down the walls with Georgia Freedom Letters](#):** Join prison abolitionists with Georgia Freedom Letters by writing to people incarcerated in Georgia to forge solidarity and build connections across walls.

- [Join El Refugio at Stewart Detention Center](#) and stand in solidarity with ICE detainees and their families in Georgia.

Hawaii

Last updated: March 26, 2021

Hawaii has had at least 1,963 cases of COVID-19 among incarcerated people, including at least nine deaths. Although Hawaii has one of the lowest COVID-19 rates in the United States in general, 2 in 5 people in prisons have tested positive for the virus. According to the [UCLA Law Behind Bars Project](#), in May 2020, 823 people were released from prison out of a total prison population of 2,189 people as a result of the pandemic, a decrease of approximately 38%. This is partially attributable to a plan beginning in early April, when the Hawaii Supreme Court appointed a judge as “[special master](#)” to coordinate early releases with public defenders. Despite these efforts, however, Hawaii recently faced a severe COVID-19 outbreak at its largest prison, Halawa Correctional Facility. A union representing over 300 employees at Halawa said the state has responded inadequately to the “[hazardous conditions](#)” at the facility, including overcrowding and understaffing. Additionally, the Oahu Community Correctional Center also faced an active outbreak (in fact, the largest cluster of cases [in the whole state](#) in December 2020). There have also been large outbreaks at Waiawa Correctional Facility and Saguaro Correctional Center, the latter of which is a private prison in Arizona which houses over a thousand incarcerated people from Hawaii. CoreCivic, the for-profit company which operates Saguaro, has [not publicly disclosed](#) COVID-19 data. Due to these outbreaks, advocates are pushing for [more drastic reductions in the prison population](#). Incarcerated people and correctional staff in Hawaii are in Phase 2 of the state’s [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor David Ige at (808) 586-2211

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Hawaii has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Ige to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly “chains of transmission,” bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Ige at

<https://governor.hawaii.gov/contact-us/contact-the-governor/>

Dear Governor Ige,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Hawaii has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 1,963 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 9 have died, making Hawaii in the top twelve states for COVID-19 rates per capita in prisons. You have already made significant progress with decarceration throughout the pandemic, but that progress cannot stop now. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to

medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Hawaiians.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Ige @GovHawaii

More than 1,963 incarcerated people in Hawaii have contracted COVID-19. @GovHawaii must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **#FreeOurOhana:** Urge Governor Ige and other state leaders to safely release people from prison by sending a message through [this ACLU online form](#). Visit their [#FreeOurOhana toolkit](#) for more actions you can take, including sample social media posts and phone scripts.
- **[Join the Hawai'i Abolitionist Collective](#)** to protest conditions of confinement and call for prison abolition. Follow their campaigns on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Idaho

Last updated: March 26, 2021

There have been at least 4,117 cases of COVID-19 among incarcerated people in Idaho, and at least 6 deaths. The Idaho prison system is severely overcrowded, operating at [over 100 percent capacity](#) at the beginning of the pandemic. The Governor has refused to substantially reduce the prison population. Correctional officers were not even required to wear masks until June, months after the CDC recommended mask-wearing, and one prison nurse quit over “concerns about mistreatment” of incarcerated people, saying that medical staff [were not following COVID-19 protocols](#). In May, people at Idaho’s largest prison, Idaho State Correctional Center, sued the state for overcrowding, [asserting](#) that cell blocks were so packed that the prison department couldn’t maintain clean toilets and that two cell blocks designed to hold 504 people were now housing 824. Additionally, for much of 2020, about 600 incarcerated people from Idaho were held at Eagle Pass Correctional Facility in Texas. There was a coronavirus outbreak there in fall 2020 that ultimately killed several

incarcerated people, but infected residents did not even know they had COVID-19 because [mass testing was not requested](#). In early December, there were reports of a severe COVID-19 outbreak at the Idaho Correctional Institution at Orofino, where [more than 40%](#) of incarcerated people were infected. Both incarcerated people and correctional employees are in Phase 2 of the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Brad Little at (208) 334-2100

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Idaho has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Little to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Little at <https://gov.idaho.gov/contact-us/>

Dear Governor Little,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Idaho has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 4,100 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 6 have died. Exacerbating the spread of the virus in state detention facilities and the suffering of those incarcerated is the severe overcrowding of Idaho's prisons. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Hawaiians.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Little @GovernorLittle

More than 4,100 incarcerated people in Idaho have caught COVID and at least six have died. [@GovernorLittle](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Stories from Inside](#): A collaborative story project from the ACLU of Idaho to build an awareness and accountability campaign to amplify the experiences of incarcerated folks during the pandemic.

Illinois

Last updated: March 26, 2021

Incarcerated people in Illinois have been hit hard by the pandemic. On April 23, *The New York Times* [named](#) Cook County Jail the #1 COVID hotspot in the U.S. There have been at least 10,813 and 87 deaths in Illinois jails and prisons over the course of the pandemic. On April 29, the state [announced](#) the names of 4,000 incarcerated people who had been released since March. However, about 75% of them had completed their sentence, and most of the remaining people were very close to finishing theirs. In fact, a [report](#) by Restore Justice found that, as of June 15, “[m]easured by the median, the typical person released since March 1, 2020 left prison just **two days early**,” and the number of people released were actually lower in 2020 than in 2019. Furthermore, the report found that releases during the pandemic exacerbated racial disparities by releasing White people more frequently than Black people and farther ahead of their release date. [Stateville Correctional Center](#) has been a particularly deadly hotspot with at least 19 deaths. [Reports from inside](#) allege that visibly sick staff members go throughout the prison without masks, and the people incarcerated there have engaged in hunger strikes and other protests against the abusive conditions. Only as of December did the state [pledge](#) to increase mandatory testing of correctional officers, and incarcerated people [report](#) a failed grievance system that has left them with horrors like roaches, medical negligence, hospitalizations, and rising death rates. Illinois’ December 4 updated [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) listed incarcerated people and correctional staff as being in a phase to be determined for the vaccine ([p.14](#)). On December 21, more than 60 organizations signed a [letter](#) to the Illinois Department of Public Health requesting that the state prioritize incarcerated people for early access to the vaccine.

Call Governor J.B. Pritzker at 217-782-6450

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because Illinois has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Pritzker to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state’s vaccine distribution plan. Governor Pritzker must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly “chains of transmission,” bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Pritzker at

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/contactus/pages/voiceanopinion.aspx>

Dear Governor Pritzker,

My name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am writing because Illinois has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. Since Cook County Jail was named the #1 COVID-19 hotspot in the nation by *The New York Times* in April, COVID-19 outbreaks have been ongoing, with at least 87 deaths of incarcerated people attributed to the virus in Illinois. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Illinois vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Illinois prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Illinois residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Pritzker @GovPritzker

At least 87 incarcerated people have died from COVID in Illinois. @GovPritzker must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left.
#FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Illinois residents are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @GovPritzker must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of Illinois' distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **[Free The People Coalition](#)**: A coalition of advocacy organizations supporting incarcerated people in Illinois. [Call](#), [tweet](#), or [sign a petition](#) to advocate for emergency releases from Illinois state prisons.
- **[John Howard Association](#)**: A prison advocacy group that has curated a [collection](#) of COVID-19 advocacy resources, including a [toolkit for families and incarcerated people](#) by the [Illinois Prison Project](#).
- **[Illinois Legislative Advocacy Training](#)**: Click [here](#) to view Restore Justice's training for advocates seeking to impact policy in Illinois, including policy relating to prison releases.
- **[Letter to Governor Pritzker demanding releases](#)**: Follow the steps of [this letter campaign](#), sponsored by Restore Justice, to take action against the insufficient and racially-discriminatory releases in the Illinois prison system during the pandemic.
- **[End IL Prison Lockdown](#)**: A coalition of activists, loved ones, & incarcerated individuals working to end the prison lockdown in Illinois and to advocate for releases. Sign their petition [here](#).

Indiana

Last updated: March 26, 2021

As of late March, at least 51 incarcerated people and 4 correctional employees have died from COVID-19 in Indiana. Outbreaks have sometimes led to horrifying abuses. In Rockville Correctional Facility, [250+ women tested positive for the virus](#) in December 2020. Prison staff at Rockville reportedly responded by locking healthy women in rooms with infected roommates and telling them the virus is a hoax. In response to these reports, the DOC published a [self-promoting op-ed](#) claiming that they were working diligently to stem the spread of the virus. Their piece contradicted the testimony of more than a half dozen women incarcerated at Rockville, however, and did not mention the word "release" once. Since last March, advocates have urged Governor Holcomb to order emergency releases, but so far he has [refused](#) to reduce the prison population. He has not released the estimated 5% of incarcerated people in Indiana prisons who were convicted under the old criminal code but would be free under the new 2014 code. He has not even released people like Linda Chiesi, who has chronic respiratory and back problems and was recommended for clemency by the parole board *twice*. More than 3,000 prison residents and 1,500 prison employees have contracted the virus. Incarcerated people and correctional staff are in Phase 2 of the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Holcomb at 317-232-4567

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I'm calling because Indiana has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Holcomb to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people. The Governor should also release everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left, as well as everyone who was convicted

under the old criminal code but would have been released under the new code. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Holcomb at

<https://www.in.gov/gov/governor-holcomb/ask-eric/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Holcomb,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Indiana has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. So far, at least 51 incarcerated people and 4 correctional employees have died from the virus. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. You must also release everyone who was convicted under the old criminal code but would have been released already under the new code.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Hoosiers.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Holcomb @GovHolcomb

We've lost at least 51 people to COVID-19 outbreaks in Indiana prisons. To save lives, [@GovHolcomb](#) must release the medically vulnerable and those who have completed more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left.
[#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [#FreeThemNowIN](#): A coalition of local advocates backed by Mourning Our Losses has issued an [open letter](#) to Governor Holcomb urging him to reduce a select 20% of the prison population. Please sign their letter and visit the [#FreeThemNowIN toolkit](#) for more action steps you can take, including [sample social media posts](#) and phone and email scripts with state-specific demands.

- **Indiana COVID Prison Project:** a data project backed by Mourning Our Losses that offers a thorough analysis of the spread of COVID in Indiana state prisons and careful recommendations for immediate action to stem the spread of the virus.

Iowa

Last updated: March 26, 2021

When the Iowa Board of Parole [released](#) nearly 500 incarcerated people in April, the prison system still was left at [well over 100% capacity](#). During the pandemic, there have been at least 4,828 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 19 deaths out of the [total pre-pandemic population](#) of around 8,500 incarcerated people. Now, the state prison population is at a [20-year-low](#) of around 7,400 but is still over capacity. Emergency releases have been limited — the population decrease is largely due to an expedited parole process and fewer admissions to prison. Iowa is the [only state in the U.S.](#) that does not have a compassionate release system. A huge [surge](#) of cases and deadly outbreaks in November have led Iowa's union for correctional officers to [demand](#) a stop on new intakes and transfers in the system. The worst outbreak tore through Anamosa State Penitentiary and ultimately [infected more than three-quarters](#) of those incarcerated there. Iowa's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) guarantees access to the vaccine for incarcerated people in Phase 2, and, while it does not specify the placement of correctional employees, the plan [implies](#) they will be prioritized in Phase 1.

Call Governor Kim Reynolds at (202) 545-0206

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because Iowa has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Reynolds to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. Governor Reynolds must also immediately begin to offer compassionate release to those most vulnerable to the virus — Iowa is the only U.S. state without any compassionate release law. These actions will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Reynolds at

[https://iqconnect.lmhostediq.com/iqextranet/EForm.aspx?_cid=FSL_IA_GOV
& fid=100007](https://iqconnect.lmhostediq.com/iqextranet/EForm.aspx?_cid=FSL_IA_GOV&fid=100007)

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Reynolds,,

My name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am writing because Iowa has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release. As the only U.S. state without a compassionate release law, Iowa must immediately begin to offer compassionate release to those most susceptible to serious illness or death from COVID-19.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Iowans.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Reynolds @IAGovernor

At least 4,828 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Iowa. @IAGovernor must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Iowa is the only state in the U.S. without a compassionate release law. @IAGovernor must begin immediately to offer compassionate releases to protect those most vulnerable to serious illness and death from COVID-19 raging behind bars. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [COVID-19 and Iowa's State Correctional Population](#): A comprehensive resource tracking the location and trends of outbreaks within the Iowa correctional system.
- [Join American Friends Service Committee Iowa](#) at #FreeThemAll events during the pandemic.

Kansas

Last updated: March 26, 2021

Kansas's incarcerated population has experienced at least 6,097 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 16 deaths during the pandemic, [concentrated](#) especially at El Dorado, Lansing, and Hutchinson facilities. In March 2020, the outbreak at Lansing reached such levels that belated testing revealed [75% positivity rates](#) in some dorms; more than 50% of the facility's residents tested positive at some point during the outbreak. A riot even broke out at one point because of the lack of masks. Governor Kelly and other state officials did not address the crisis and overcrowding; their release efforts were negligible. In August, a severe outbreak forced Hutchinson Correctional Facility into lockdown, much like it had at Lansing, and a December outbreak at [El Dorado](#) resulted in a hunger

strike due to inadequate safety protocols. Additionally, there have been raging outbreaks at jails, where people tend to stay for short periods of time, including a November outbreak at [Jackson County Jail](#) (at 17% over capacity at the time) and a December resurgence of the virus at [Sedgwick County Detention Center](#). As of mid-December, Kansas had the [third-highest state COVID-19 infection rate](#) among incarcerated people. While neither incarcerated people nor correctional staff are included explicitly in Kansas's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), prison workers were included in the [first batch of vaccine doses](#) received by the state, whereas the Department of Health and Environment has [yet to decide](#) when incarcerated people will receive the vaccine.

Call Governor Laura Kelly at (785) 296-3232

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Kansas has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Kelly to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Governor Kelly must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Kelly at <https://governor.kansas.gov/questions-form/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Kelly,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Kansas has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. Kansas prisons have been home to several raging outbreaks that have resulted in more than 6,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and at least 16 deaths among incarcerated people. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Kansas vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Kansas prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Kansas residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Kelly @GovLauraKelly

In Kansas, more than 6,000 incarcerated people have contracted COVID-19. At least 16 have died. @GovLauraKelly must grant emergency releases to the medically vulnerable and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Kansans are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @GovLauraKelly must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of Kansas's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Join the Kansas Coalition for Sentence and Prison Reform](#) as they fight to change the prison system in solidarity with people incarcerated in Kansas. Follow them on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

Kentucky

Last updated: March 26, 2021

At least 7,883 incarcerated people in Kentucky have had confirmed cases of COVID-19, and at least 48 have died. A particularly gruesome outbreak at [Kentucky State Reformatory](#), a prison for people with chronic illnesses or conditions requiring housing in a psychiatric unit, was ongoing as of January 2021. In August, to attempt to mitigate the COVID-19 crises behind bars at this and other facilities, Governor Beshear [commuted](#) the sentences of 646 incarcerated people, 525 of whom had less than six months left in their sentence. By the end of January 2021, [28 incarcerated people](#) had died at the Reformatory, and 4 in 7 incarcerated people in state prisons had tested positive for the virus. But despite these concerning numbers, Kentucky has not made clear when incarcerated people will receive access to the vaccine. The [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes conflicting information, with one chart saying incarcerated people would be in Phase 2, and another saying incarcerated people and correctional staff would be in Phase 1B.

Call Governor Andy Beshear at (502) 564-2611

Hello, my name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am calling because Kentucky has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge

Governor Beshear to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Beshear at <https://governor.ky.gov/contact/contact-us>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Beshear,

My name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am writing because Kentucky has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. At least 7,883 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19 and at least 48 have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Kentucky residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Beshear @GovAndyBeshear

In Kentucky, more than 7,800 incarcerated people have caught COVID and at least 48 have died. @GovAndyBeshear must grant emergency releases to the medically vulnerable and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Prison Wives of Green River Correctional Complex](#) and [Just-US 4 KY](#) have organized multiple protests against COVID-19 outbreaks in Kentucky prisons. They are partnering with other organizations in Kentucky to call for releases and a return to visitation for people incarcerated. Take action with them using their toolkit: [Bit.ly/PWGRCC](https://bit.ly/PWGRCC).

- [Kentucky Inmate Families](#) is a group that shares information and offers support to people incarcerated and their families. They are currently seeking contributions to memorialize people who have passed away from COVID-19 while in state prisons.
- [Inmate Support Kentucky](#) is a private group that offers support to the families of people incarcerated, to people reentering from prison, and to advocate for their loved ones still incarcerated.
- [Fight Toxic Prisons](#) is a national group organizing resistance at the intersection of incarceration and the environment. In Kentucky they organize phone zaps and information-gathering campaigns, with the goal of pushing for clemencies. Follow and join their activism on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).

Louisiana

Last updated: March 26, 2021

Louisiana has the highest per capita incarceration rate and has historically had the [highest prison mortality rate](#) in the nation. Still state authorities [shortened the sentences of just 68 incarcerated people](#) during the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the course of the pandemic, at least 3,193 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 37 have died. Not included in those numbers are those lost in the [horrific outbreak at Oakdale](#), a federal prison complex in Louisiana. But while Oakdale has gained more national attention, the toll of COVID-19 on state prisons has also been severe. Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, which has a [long troubled history](#), has had the deadliest outbreak, leading to [at least 17 deaths](#) of incarcerated people. People living through the outbreak [reported](#) a stark refusal by prison staff to offer medical care, social distancing, or testing. Especially given this dire situation, advocates have urged Governor Edwards to grant more releases, but he has refused. Though he reportedly has approved a few clemencies behind closed doors, there are many people in Louisiana (including at least eight women) who already have been recommended for clemency by the parole board but cannot be released because Governor Edwards has not signed his approval. Louisiana's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes incarcerated people as the last category listed in Phase 2 and correctional staff listed in Phase 1B.

Call Governor John Bel Edwards at (225) 342-7015

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Louisiana has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Edwards to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Edwards at

<https://gov.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/form/home/4>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Louisiana has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. At least 37 people incarcerated in Louisiana state prisons have died from COVID-19, including 17 deaths at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola alone. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Louisianans.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Edwards @LouisianaGov

At least 37 people incarcerated in Louisiana state prisons have died from COVID-19. [@LouisianaGov](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **#HomeForTheHolidays:** Join [The Promise of Justice Initiative](#) in their campaign to bring incarcerated people home for the holidays by following their email and call scripts [here](#). If you have a loved one who is incarcerated and medically vulnerable or otherwise at risk, you can request assistance from The Promise of Justice Initiative by filling out [this form](#).
- **[Voice of the Experienced demands:](#)** Help VOTE Nola, a group led by formerly incarcerated people, achieve their [demands](#) by following their [phone script](#), signing their [petition](#), and [emailing](#) decisionmakers.
- **[Make Redemption a Possibility:](#)** Email members of the Louisiana House Committee on Administration of Criminal Justice and ask them to vote YES on [HB 541](#), which would allow people serving life sentences to apply for parole after 30 years, and those serving long sentences to apply for parole after 20 years. Campaign organized by the coalition group [Louisianans for Prison Alternatives](#).

- **[Locked In With COVID-19](#)**: A report about the toll of COVID-19 in Louisiana prisons released by [the Promise of Justice Initiative](#).

Maine

Last updated: March 26, 2021

The COVID-19 surge in Maine prisons mostly held off for several months of the pandemic but emerged in full force in late fall 2020. As of March 2021, state prisons have had 167 confirmed cases and one death COVID-19 deaths during the pandemic. The prison population has been reduced by [only 157 people](#), or 7% of the prison population. In May, the ACLU and other advocates pressured state leaders, including Governor Mills, to implement mass releases to prevent an outbreak from occurring as the pandemic persisted. The state ignored this call to action, with a judge [dismissing](#) a lawsuit by the ACLU in August, and continued to [determine releases](#) using the same eligibility criteria as before the pandemic. In October and November, the virus [spread uncontrollably](#) in the Maine Correctional Center in Windham, infecting nearly 40% of those incarcerated there and sending at least three to the hospital. Conditions across the state have been abysmal, even prompting people incarcerated at Androscoggin County Jail to [go on a hunger strike](#) in October. Incarcerated people and correctional employees are both listed in Phase 2 of Maine's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#). But some stakeholders, including Cumberland County Sheriff Kevin Joyce, ACLU of Maine Policy Director Meagan Sway, and Joseph Jackson of the Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition [believe](#) both groups should be in Phase 1. Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Nirav Shah [reported](#) on December 18 that his agency had not yet come to a final decision.

Call Governor Janet Mills at (207) 287-3531

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Maine has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Mills to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Governor Mills must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Mills at

<https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/contact/share-your-opinion>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Mills,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Maine has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing enough access to the vaccine. COVID-19 has aggressively infiltrated Maine prisons since the late fall, and hundreds have been infected. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison

population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 of the Maine vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Maine prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Maine residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Mills @GovJanetMills

COVID-19 has infected more than 160 people incarcerated in Maine. @GovJanetMills must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Maine residents are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @GovJanetMills must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 of Maine's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **#ReleaseOurLovedOnes:** Join the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project in calling on Governor Mills and other power holders to exercise their authority to #ReleaseOurLovedOnes, while ensuring anyone remaining inside can adhere to CDC guidelines for safe physical distancing and properly protect themselves and correctional staff from COVID-19 exposure and community transmission. Send a letter [here](#).

Maryland

Last updated: March 26, 2021

As of mid-December, Maryland's incarcerated population had 4,289 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 24 confirmed deaths from the virus. The Maryland Attorney General, Brian Frosh, issued a [letter](#) to Governor Hogan on April 3, 2020 calling for a broader and faster release of incarcerated people. He also suggested measures to improve hygiene and isolate those infected with COVID-19 in Maryland prisons. On April 7th, a coalition of 19 justice-focused organizations issued a [list of demands](#) surrounding mass release. The pressures worked, as Governor Hogan backed away from his early stance that incarcerated individuals were safer in prison. He signed an [executive order](#) on April 19th calling for expedited release of about 650 incarcerated individuals, and [another order on November 17th](#) making about 1,200 incarcerated people eligible for early release. But Maryland's safety procedures in prisons are [woefully inadequate](#). Although Maryland prisons conducted universal testing earlier this year, since late August they have switched to "serial testing" which means that they test only 60 to 70 people from each facility in addition to incarcerated people who enter facilities. Workers at the Baltimore Central Booking and Intake Center are tested weekly, but otherwise prison staff members are tested only once a month. There are also [great flaws](#) with Maryland's system for granting parole, which has restricted releases during the pandemic. Maryland is one of the few states where the governor has final say in granting parole. As of March 3rd, Governor Hogan had granted parole to only 19 of the 135 people that the Maryland Parole Commission had recommended. A bill has been introduced in the [house](#) and the [senate](#) that would repeal provisions requiring the governor's approval to grant parole. In their two-phase [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), Maryland includes incarcerated people in Phase 1.

Call Governor Larry Hogan

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because Maryland has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Hogan to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies and parole to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Hogan at

<https://governor.maryland.gov/contact-the-governor/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Hogan,

My name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am writing because Maryland has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 4,200 incarcerated people have contracted the virus in Maryland, and at least 24 have died. Maryland has failed to implement basic safety protocols such as universal testing for correctional staff, demonstrating its clear inadequacy to properly care for those in its custody. Now, cases are surging. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies and parole to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. To start, you must immediately grant parole to everyone who has already been

recommended for release by the Maryland Parole Commission. You are the only reason these people are still in prison.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Maryland residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Hogan @GovLarryHogan

More than 4,200 incarcerated people in Maryland have contracted COVID. At least 24 have died. @GovLarryHogan must grant emergency releases and parole to the medically vulnerable and those who have served half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **#FixMDParole:** [Send a message](#) to your representative asking them to take politics out of parole during the 2021 legislative session.
- **#BringOurKidsHome:** [Join the campaign](#) to protect Maryland youth from the virus by reducing the number of young people in juvenile jails and youth prisons as quickly as possible.
- **Prisoner's Solidarity Committee** and **People's Power Assembly (Baltimore)** has organized protests against the conditions of incarceration in Maryland during the pandemic.

Massachusetts

Last updated: March 26, 2021

As of March 2021, least 3,017 incarcerated people in Massachusetts have contracted the virus and at least 20 have died. Many of those incarcerated are [reluctant to report their symptoms](#) due to the threat of solitary confinement and lockdowns, and most institutions only test people who display obvious symptoms. Efforts to reduce the number of people who are incarcerated have slowed, and as of December 7th, the number of people in jail awaiting trial had grown by 112 since early April. The state grants medical parole to only a very select few. On October 19th, the Prisoners' Legal Services of Massachusetts filed an [emergency motion](#) ordering the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Correction to establish a home confinement program. [The DOC officials have indicated](#) that they would likely not implement such a program until April, placing all

incarcerated people at continued risk during the interim months. Massachusetts has included incarcerated populations and correctional employees in Phase 1 of its [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#). Advocates are concerned about vaccine distribution delays in prisons, given that it will be difficult to store and administer vaccines and to ensure that incarcerated people receive both doses of the vaccine due to the ongoing ludicrous practice of transferring people between facilities in the middle of a pandemic.

Call Governor Charlie Baker at 617-725-4005

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Massachusetts has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Baker to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Baker at

<https://www.mass.gov/forms/email-the-governors-office>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Baker,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Massachusetts has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 3,000 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 20 have died. The Department of Corrections has delayed the establishment of a home confinement program until at least April 2021, when the virus will have been killing people for over a year. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Massachusetts residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Baker @MassGovernor

More than 3,000 incarcerated people have contracted COVID-19 in Massachusetts. @MassGovernor must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **#FreeOurFamilies:** Learn about how to advocate for decarceration with the [Week of Action resource list](#) by the Families for Justice as Healing and Building up People Not Prisons Coalition.

Michigan

Last updated: March 26, 2021

Prisons in Michigan have [acted as viral incubators](#) for COVID. The state DOC has forced incarcerated people to be in close proximity with no ventilation and has transferred many of them between units with no apparent rationale. The numbers are horrifying: overall, at least 25,929 incarcerated people in Michigan have contracted the virus, and 139 [have died](#), the [fourth-highest](#) death rate from COVID of any state prison system. According to the Marshall project, Michigan state prisons lead the nation in the rate of people falling ill to COVID-19 in their custody. The Michigan Department of Corrections says that it [has released at least 5,000 parole eligible incarcerated people](#) since the start of the pandemic but these people were likely not released due to risk from the virus. Incarcerated people [report](#) no organized state-wide plan to protect them from COVID-19, which has resulted in continued ludicrous practices such as unnecessary transfers — a set of which recently led to an explosive [outbreak](#) at Kinross Correctional Facility. In its two-phase [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), Michigan has included prison employees in Phase 1B but has included incarcerated people only who are over age 65 or who have high-risk medical conditions in Phase 1C. All other incarcerated people will fall into Phase 2 of the plan along with the general population.

Call Governor Gretchen Whitmer at (517) 373-3400

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Michigan has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Whitmer to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Whitmer at

<https://somgovweb.state.mi.us/GovRelations/ContactGovernor.aspx>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Whitmer,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Michigan has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. People incarcerated in Michigan state prisons are falling ill at the highest rate of any prison system. More than 25,000 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and 139 have died. Now, Michigan has the fifth-highest death toll for incarcerated people of all states in the U.S. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Michigan residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Whitmer @GovWhitmer

139 people have died from COVID-19 in Michigan prisons, the 4th highest death rate from the virus in any prison system. [@GovWhitmer](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Get involved with Michigan Abolition and Prisoner Solidarity](#) to organize in solidarity with imprisoned people against the violence of incarceration.
- [Join Nation Outside](#) in their campaign to build transformative systems of support for justice impacted people in Michigan.

Minnesota

Last updated: March 26, 2021

In December 2020, COVID-19 was [present in almost every prison in Minnesota](#). Most Minnesota prisons have poor ventilation systems that recirculate the same air, and St. Cloud and Stillwater, two facilities that have been operating for a particularly long time, have open-front doors with bars that

make it almost impossible to stop the transmission of particles. There is also not enough space in some of the facilities with the highest number of cases to isolate those infected with the virus. The consequences have been disastrous. At least 3,966 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19 and there have been at least 12 deaths. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Minnesota's state prison population has declined by about 17%. The state expanded its conditional medical release program to include those at risk of COVID-19 for eligibility for early release. More than 2,300 people applied for this program after its expansion, but the Minnesota DOC granted only around 150 of those requests and has refused to accept more. On October 22, the ACLU of Minnesota filed a [class action lawsuit](#) against the Minnesota DOC and its commissioner Paul Schnell alleging that the Minnesota DOC has violated its legal obligation to protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 by failing to implement measures to slow the spread of the virus and denying medical release for people with conditions that put them at high risk. In its [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), Minnesota uses vague language and fails to specify which groups are included in its phases. Minnesota is the only state with such minimal information provided in its vaccine plan.

Call Governor Tim Walz at (651) 201-3400

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Minnesota has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Walz to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Governor Walz must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Walz at <https://mn.gov/governor/contact/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Walz,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Minnesota has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and also has not guaranteed them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. COVID-19 is present in almost every prison in Minnesota, and more than 3,900 incarcerated people have tested positive for the virus. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Minnesota vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Minnesota prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Minnesota residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Walz @GovTimWalz

COVID-19 has infected more than 3,900 incarcerated people in Minnesota. @GovTimWalz must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Minnesota residents are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @GovTimWalz must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of Minnesota's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Minnesota is the only state that has not yet released a comprehensive vaccine distribution plan. When it does, @GovTimWalz must guarantee early & ongoing access for incarcerated people to prevent further deaths and unnecessary suffering. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **[Demand Incarcerated People Are Protected During COVID-19 Crisis](#)**: Sign Voices for Racial Justice's [petition](#) demanding measures to protect the lives of incarcerated people in Minnesota.
- **[Open Letter to Minnesota Department of Health](#)**: Sign this letter created by MN Vaccine Equity to demand that people in prisons and immigrant detention be prioritized alongside long-term care residents in Phase 1 of vaccine distribution. Also, before January 7 at 5pm, you can also leave a public comment on ethical vaccine distribution at [this link](#).
- **[Twin Cities Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee](#)**: Join TCIWOC, a union of prisoners, loved ones, and supporters, who are working together to transform the prison system in Minnesota.

Mississippi

Last updated: March 26, 2021

There have been at least 1,397 cases of COVID-19 infections and 23 deaths from COVID-19 among the state prison population in Mississippi. The real numbers are likely much larger, as the state of Mississippi has provided [testing](#) only for incarcerated people displaying COVID-19 symptoms. Additionally, at least [106 people incarcerated in Mississippi's prisons have died in the DOC's custody since late 2019](#) and the DOC has not yet determined whether many of these deaths were caused by COVID-19. In May, the MacArthur Justice Center, the ACLU of Mississippi, and the Mississippi Center for Justice filed a class action [lawsuit](#) against the Mississippi DOC in response to the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility's and South Mississippi Correctional Institute's inadequate response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The two prisons have open bay units that make it impossible for incarcerated people to maintain a six foot distance between each other, and incarcerated people have not had their medical needs met partially due to a lack of staffing. Governor Tate Reeves vetoed the [Mississippi Correctional Safety and Rehabilitation Act of 2020](#) which would have made many more people eligible for parole and reduced overcrowding in Mississippi prisons. Mississippi's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) is currently under revision, but the National Academy for State Health Policy [has recorded](#) that Mississippi initially planned to include incarcerated people in Phase 2 of its three-phase plan.

Call Governor Tate Reeves at (601) 359-3150

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Mississippi has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and also has not guaranteed them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Reeves to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Governor Reeves must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Reeves at governor@govreeves.ms.gov

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Reeves,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Mississippi has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and also has not guaranteed them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. The spread of the virus has been largely ignored by state officials, even as more than a hundred people have died in state custody in the past year and the DOC has not yet determined whether these deaths were caused by the virus. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. To truly make an

impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Mississippi vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Mississippi prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Mississippi residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Reeves @tatereeves

More than one hundred people have died in Mississippi state prisons from unknown causes in the past year. Governor @tatereeves must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who've served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Mississippians are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. Governor @tatereeves must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of Mississippi's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **[Take Action for Mississippians](#):** FWD.us has launched a campaign for Mississippians to contact Mississippi legislators. Urge them to finish what they started and pass legislation to reduce the state's dangerously high prison population. Use this [email script](#) to demand action now.

Missouri

Last updated: March 26, 2021

In the face of challenges like staff shortages, Missouri's prison system has [failed](#) to protect its residents from COVID-19. Ignoring public health concerns, prison officials have frequently

transferred staff and incarcerated people between prisons during the pandemic. In some cases, incarcerated people who have not contracted the virus are being housed with others who have tested positive and are even required to clean their cells. The dangerous transfers, in addition to the lack of consistent protective measures, have caused the virus to devastate Missouri prisons. There have been at least 5,581 cases and 48 deaths from COVID-19 among incarcerated people in Missouri. Advocates have been pushing officials to reduce prison populations during the pandemic. Representative Tom Hannegan has proposed a [bill](#) that would allow some elderly incarcerated people who were convicted of non-violent crimes and who have served at least 30 years to be eligible for early release. An analysis of Hannegan's proposal found that [only about 57 people would qualify to be released under the bill's terms](#), which pales in comparison to the thousands who have suffered from the virus. In Missouri's three-phase [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), incarcerated populations are included in Phase 3, while correctional employees are prioritized in Phase 1B. There is no medical evidence that staff vaccinations alone will protect incarcerated people from the virus.

Call Governor Mike Parson at (573) 751-3222

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Missouri has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also prioritizing correctional staff for vaccine access significantly earlier than incarcerated people. There is no medical evidence that staff vaccinations will be enough to limit the spread of the virus. I urge Governor Parson to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the vaccine distribution plan. The Governor must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Parson at <https://governor.mo.gov/contact-us>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Parson,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Missouri has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also prioritizing correctional staff for vaccine access significantly earlier than incarcerated people. There have been more than 5,500 cases and 48 deaths from COVID-19 among incarcerated people in Missouri, and negligent medical practices like unnecessary prison transfers and poor quarantine protocols have exacerbated this crisis. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been

incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

It is great that you plan to prioritize correctional staff for early vaccine access, but there is no medical evidence that staff vaccinations alone will be enough to limit the spread of the virus. You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Missouri vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Missouri prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Missouri residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Parson @GovParsonMO

Incarcerated people in Missouri have had more than 5,500 COVID-19 cases, including 48 deaths. @GovParsonMO must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Providing early vaccine access to correctional employees is not enough to stop the deadly spread of COVID-19 in Missouri prisons. @GovParsonMO must prioritize incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the distribution plan to avoid more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Call to action by the ACLU of Missouri](#): Call Governor Parson (573-751-3222) to push his office to commute the sentences of those most vulnerable in Missouri's detention facilities. Visit [this page](#) for more details about the ACLU's demands and what you can do.

Montana

Last updated: March 26, 2021

More than 1,120 incarcerated individuals within Montana's DOC and other contracted facilities have tested positive for COVID-19, including at least 6 people who have died. In April 2020, Governor Bullock issued [a directive](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Montana correctional facilities. The directive included the suspension of any new transfers into DOC custody, except for those

authorized by the Director. It also required the parole board to consider early release for incarcerated people who were elderly, pregnant, had pre-existing medical conditions, or were nearing their release date. However, [the Bozeman Daily Chronicle reports](#) that many incarcerated people, their family members, attorneys, and human rights groups are not satisfied with Governor Bullock and the DOC's actions, and with good reason: only three people have been granted parole based on the conditions laid out in Bullock's April directive. Moreover, the prison population within the state has decreased only minimally since the directive. Officials from the governor's office report that there are no plans to release more people from correctional facilities or to expand infrastructure at prisons to allow for better COVID-19 safety precautions. Almost a year into the pandemic, Montana has failed to contain the spread of the virus. The DOC found the directive's ban on transfers to be too inconvenient and [resumed](#) dangerous transfers in June. [Publicly- and privately-run facilities](#) continue to put their residents' lives at risk everyday with a severe lack of health protocols. People are still falling ill and dying. On January 4th, Greg Gianforte was inaugurated as Montana's 25th Governor — he has not announced any plans to reduce the prison population yet, but since he just stepped into office he may be more amenable to our demands. Montana's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes correctional employees in Phase 1 and incarcerated people in either Phase 1 or Phase 2 of distribution.

Call Governor Greg Gianforte at (406) 444-3111

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Montana has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Gianforte to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Gianforte at <https://governor.mt.gov/contact#>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Gianforte,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Montana has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 1,120 incarcerated people in Michigan have tested positive for the virus and at least six have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Montana residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Gianforte at @GregForMontana

More than 1,120 people incarcerated in Montana have caught COVID and at least 6 have died. @GregForMontana must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and everyone who has finished half of their sentence and has less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [ACLU of Montana COVID-19 response](#): Support the ACLU of Montana's #LetThemComeHome campaign by pushing Governor Bullock to reduce the number of people in state custody. Email the governor using this [template](#), and post [a picture of yourself with their campaign hashtag](#) on social media.

Nebraska

Last updated: March 26, 2021

At least 982 incarcerated people in Nebraska have tested positive for COVID-19 and at least six of them have died. [Recent outbreaks](#) infiltrated Omaha Correctional Center, Tecumseh State Prison and Lincoln Correctional Center. Nebraska has the [second most overcrowded](#) prison system in the country, and the state's incarcerated population faces serious risks. The ACLU of Nebraska reports that [chronic overcrowding and understaffing](#) of prison facilities have created the perfect conditions for the virus to wreak havoc among both incarcerated people and correctional staff. Despite clear evidence of this risk and its realization, Governor Ricketts has refused to take emergency action to reduce the state prison population. But rather than condemning this failure to protect incarcerated people from COVID-19, the *Omaha World Herald* [praised](#) Nebraska's relatively low COVID-19 infection numbers compared to its midwest neighbors, despite the unimaginable conditions in which incarcerated people in Nebraska are living and the impending COVID-19 disaster in Nebraska prisons if no action is taken. On July 1, the state's correctional department was forced to declare an [overcrowding emergency](#) as capacity in the state's 10 prisons exceeded 151%. This figure was well above the mandated 140% threshold, which still is dangerously high. Incarcerated people and correctional staff both are included in Phase 1C of Nebraska's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Pete Ricketts at (402) 471-2244

Hello, my name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am calling because Nebraska has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Ricketts to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable

incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Ricketts at <https://governor.nebraska.gov/contact-form>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Ricketts,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Nebraska has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. Because of your inaction and the conditions that created breeding grounds for COVID-19, the state corrections department was forced to declare an overcrowding emergency in July when 10 prisons exceeded 151% capacity. During the pandemic, at least 982 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19, and at least 6 have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Nebraskans.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Ricketts @GovRicketts

10 Nebraska prisons exceeded 151% capacity this summer, and 850+ of those incarcerated have caught COVID. @GovRicketts must grant emergency releases to the medically vulnerable and those who have served half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **Protect Incarcerated Nebraskans:** Join the ACLU of Nebraska in demanding that the Nebraska Parole Board waive certain programming requirements like community service in

the midst of COVID-19 and to favor parole release for vulnerable populations. Call Ms. Rosalyn Cotton, Chair of the Board of Parole, and use this [script](#).

Nevada

Last updated: March 26, 2021

There have been at least [5,467 positive COVID-19 cases](#) among Nevada's incarcerated population, including at least 53 deaths. As of March 2021, one in three people incarcerated in Nevada's prisons had contracted COVID-19. In two weeks in late November, the number of COVID-19 cases among Nevada prisoners [grew](#) by about 71%. The most severe outbreaks were at Warm Springs Correctional Center and the Humboldt Conservation Camp. Along with other prison advocates across the state, the ACLU of Nevada held a virtual press conference on November 19th calling for state officials to take urgent action in response to the aggressive outbreaks. Families of incarcerated people and advocates in Nevada remain very critical of the state's handling of the COVID-19 situation in prisons and have called repeatedly for the Department of Corrections and Governor Sisolak to issue compassionate release to those in the state's prisons who are particularly susceptible to the virus. However, as of November 18th, Nevada prison officials maintain that they've identified [just two people in a population of nearly 14,000](#) who would be eligible for this early release based on their vulnerability to COVID-19. Governor Sisolak has not used his emergency powers to release anyone incarcerated in Nevada and has done [next to nothing](#) besides issuing statements of concern about the spread of the virus in places like correctional settings. Nevada's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes correctional employees in the Tier 1 category, while incarcerated people are included in Tier 2. (Instead of the traditional three Phases, Nevada's plan has four Tiers).

Call Governor Steve Sisolak at (775) 684-5670

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Nevada has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Sisolak to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Sisolak at <https://gov.nv.gov/Forms/Share/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Sisolak,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Nevada has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 5,400 people in state prisons have contracted the virus. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts across the country and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed “non-violent” crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Nevada residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Sisolak @GovSisolak

Over 4,600 people in Nevada prisons have caught COVID. At least 53 have died. And @GovSisolak refuses to release people. He must grant emergency releases, starting with the medically vulnerable. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Join Mass Liberation Project - Nevada](#) to fight for an end to mass incarceration in Nevada, and to demand #CARENOTCAGES during this pandemic. Follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

New Hampshire

Last updated: March 26, 2021

Prior to December, New Hampshire had administered only [389 COVID-19 tests](#) for incarcerated people during the entire pandemic, out of a total prison population of around 2,150 people. This testing refusal persisted despite [dangerous transfers and intakes](#). The prison system had recorded just one positive case. But now, after severe outbreaks and belated testing increases have been initiated, at least 452 incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19. The Department of Corrections has reported two deaths from the virus. As of January 2021, the largest outbreak has occurred at New Hampshire State Prison for Men in Concord, where at least 183 residents and 56 staff members had tested positive for the virus by December 2020. The situation was so dire that the state [called in the National Guard](#) to “help” quell the outbreak — but still refused to provide universal testing to incarcerated people to actually identify infections. New Hampshire has not taken any measures to release significant portions of its prison population during the pandemic, including those who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. New Hampshire’s [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes incarcerated people and correctional staff in Phase 2 of distribution.

Call Governor Chris Sununu at (603) 271-2121

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because New Hampshire has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Sununu to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Sununu at governorsununu@nh.gov

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Sununu,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because New Hampshire has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. A woeful lack of testing and irresponsible practices like transfers and intakes have led to the outbreaks currently raging in New Hampshire's prisons. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all New Hampshire residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Sununu @GovChrisSununu

For months, New Hampshire prisons ignored COVID. Now, the virus has arrived in full force. [@GovChrisSununu](#) must grant emergency releases, starting with medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **Letter By Letter NH/VT:** Help to send a letter to every single person incarcerated in Vermont and New Hampshire, including those sent to out-of-state facilities, with Letter by Letter NH/VT.

New Jersey

Last updated: March 26, 2021

In the first two months of the pandemic, New Jersey prisons had the [highest death rate](#) of any state in the U.S. During that time period, 42 people died. The death toll has now climbed to 53 (the seventh-highest death rate of all states in the U.S.), and more than 4,600 incarcerated people have tested positive for the virus. In October, New Jersey made national headlines when it became the first state (and, as of December, still the only one) to pass legislation for mass releases of incarcerated people. More than 2,000 people were [released](#) on November 4, and another 1,000 are set to be released in January. In total, these releases constitute about 35% of the state's prison population. This law bases releases purely on a person's sentence, thus excluding many elderly or medically vulnerable people from consideration for release. New Jersey's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) does not specify the prioritization of prison residents and staff but implies that incarcerated people will be included in Phase 2 and correctional staff in Phase 1B.

Call Governor Murphy at (609) 292-6000

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because New Jersey has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Murphy to follow the advice of medical experts and grant emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people. While New Jersey's release efforts up to this point have significantly reduced the prison population, they are based on sentence length rather than medical vulnerability. Additional efforts focused on medical need will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Murphy at <https://www.nj.gov/governor/contact/all/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Murphy,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because New Jersey has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. New Jersey prisons have been incubators for COVID-19 throughout the entire pandemic. More than 4,600 incarcerated people have tested positive for the virus, including at least 53 who have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and grant emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people. While New Jersey's release efforts up to this point have significantly reduced the prison population, they are based on sentences rather than medical vulnerability.

To truly make an impact, it is important that prison releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our

prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

These decarceration measures will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, they will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all New Jersey residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Murphy @GovMurphy

New Jersey's lauded prison release measures are based only on incarcerated people's sentences, not their medical vulnerability. @GovMurphy must grant emergency releases, starting with medically vulnerable people, in order to avoid more unnecessary death and suffering. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **#LetThemGo:** A campaign by the national grassroots organization [All Of Us Or None](#) (Northern NJ chapter). Share the video testimonies of the organization's incarcerated comrades, and create your own videos. Tag Governor Murphy and All Of Us Or None.
- **NJ Prison Justice Watch:** A coalition of survivors, families, faith based communities and advocates calling for an end to torture in New Jersey correctional facilities.
- **New Jersey Institute for Social Justice:** Join NJISJ's campaign to end criminal justice policies that result in the criminalization of communities of color, racial injustice and mass incarceration.

New Mexico

Last updated: March 26, 2021

At least 2,968 incarcerated people in [New Mexico's Corrections Department](#), or 3 in 7 people in state prisons, have tested positive for COVID-19, and at least 28 have died. This is the highest rate of deaths to COVID-19 in any prison system in the country, according to the Marshall Project. Although the state released [one-third of its jail populations](#) in mid-March 2020 (primarily those being held in pretrial detention, i.e. not having been convicted of any crime), jails still became sites of COVID-19 outbreaks. Authorities covered up the severity of the crisis, not revealing, for example, that at one point [60%](#) of the population was infected with the virus at San Juan County Detention Center. Still, the decarceral measures taken in New Mexico's jails were not mirrored whatsoever in the state's 11 prisons. By June, [only 46 people](#) had been released on the state level under an executive order signed by Governor Grisham intended to make the prisons safer amid the pandemic — a number not nearly large enough to make a meaningful impact on the health conditions behind bars. The strict qualifications for early release under the governor's executive order generated backlash from groups like the New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association and the ACLU. Bennet Baur, chief

public defender in New Mexico, said that there is a [“lack of systemic will or imagination”](#) at the state level and that it is “a failure for all of us” in New Mexico. Lo and behold, since June, COVID-19 has penetrated several New Mexico prisons and has led to significant outbreaks. New Mexico’s practice of transferring all those convicted of sex offenses to Otero County Prison Facility led to an outbreak that infected at least [80%](#) of the facility’s residents and killed at least 3. Baur’s statement about a systemic lack of care certainly rings true; in response to a November outbreak at the Penitentiary of New Mexico, a Corrections Department spokesperson [fixated](#) on the safety of everyone except those locked inside with the virus: “When we start to see community spread, this is the unfortunate reality in congregate living settings.” New Mexico’s [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes correctional employees in Phase 1B and incarcerated individuals as “later Phase 1 targets.”

Call Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham at (505) 476-2200

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because New Mexico has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. Our state prisons have the highest rate of death of any prison system in the country, according to the Marshall Project. I urge Governor Grisham to follow the advice of medical experts and grant emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly “chains of transmission,” bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Grisham at

<https://www.governor.state.nm.us/contact-the-governor/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Grisham,

My name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am writing because New Mexico has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. Your state prisons have the highest rate of death of any prison system in the country, according to the Marshall Project. More than 2,900 incarcerated people have tested positive for the virus and at least 28 have died. You have taken barely any meaningful efforts to reduce the prison population, and more people will die if you do not act now. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that prison releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

These decarceration measures will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, they will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease

pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all New Mexico residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Grisham @GovMLG

More than 2,900 people in New Mexico prisons have contracted COVID and at least 28 have died. @GovMLG must grant emergency releases, starting with medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

New Mexico state prisons have the highest rate of death from COVID-19 in the nation. @GovMLG only releases can prevent more avoidable deaths.
#FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Get involved with the Sante Fe Dreamers Project](#) and demand that I.C.E. #FreeThemAll from the dangerous conditions of detention.
- [Join Albuquerque SURJ](#) in their actions to demand decarceration.

New York

Last updated: March 26, 2021

At least 6,241 incarcerated people and 4,919 correctional employees in [New York's state prisons](#) have tested positive for COVID-19. Of those, at least 35 incarcerated people and 8 staff members have lost their lives. Although correctional staff across New York's prisons have documented almost as many infections, their death rate is far lower than that of incarcerated people. Viral cases in NY prisons [rose](#) dramatically in December 2020, with 120 new cases documented in the week of December 7th alone. The outbreaks were concentrated in seven state prisons, including Attica Correctional Facility. In April 2020, 165 physicians and medical professionals penned an [open letter](#) to Governor Cuomo asking him to grant emergency clemencies to people at high risk for COVID-19. The letter specifically mentioned that releasing NY's roughly 10,000 incarcerated elderly people would save lives and resources that could be reinvested into necessary public health tools during the COVID-19 crisis. Instead of granting these mass releases, Cuomo established a [limited release mechanism](#) ordering the release of people convicted of low-level, nonviolent crimes who were within 90 days of their scheduled release date, along with [eight pregnant women](#) who were within 180 days of their release. As of late July, this mechanism had allowed for the release of only [1,400 people](#). Advocates have launched several campaigns targeting Cuomo to release more people, noting that [more than 2,500 people](#) in prisons have applied for clemency during the pandemic, but he has only granted 12 requests. [Several](#) of the people who have died in New York prisons from COVID-19 had outgoing applications for clemency, medical parole, or both that Cuomo ignored. The state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) implied that incarcerated people and correctional staff would receive the vaccine in Phase 2, but Cuomo has offered [conflicting information](#) about whether incarcerated people would actually be prioritized at all. Advocacy groups, including the Legal Aid Society, have railed against [Cuomo's refusal](#) to vaccinate people in jails and prisons along with other Phase 1B

populations. As of January 12th, more than 665,000 New Yorkers have received the first dose of the vaccine, but not a single incarcerated person has been vaccinated.

Call Governor Andrew Cuomo at (518) 474-8390

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because New York has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Cuomo to follow the advice of medical experts and grant emergency clemencies, starting with medically vulnerable incarcerated people. You must also vaccinate incarcerated people in Phase 1B of the New York distribution plan. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Cuomo at

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Cuomo,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because New York has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 6,200 incarcerated people have tested positive for the virus and at least 35 have died. Several of the people who have died so far had outgoing applications for clemency or medical parole that you ignored. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that prison releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1B of the New York vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

These decarceration measures, along with prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine, will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, they will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all New Yorkers.

Thank you,

[your name]

Tweet at Governor Cuomo @NYGovCuomo

@NYGovCuomo has only granted clemency to 12 of the 2,500+ incarcerated people who have applied during the pandemic. At least 35 incarcerated New Yorkers have died from COVID. He must grant sweeping emergency releases for medically vulnerable people now. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Incarcerated New Yorkers are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @NYGovCuomo must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1B of the distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [#CuomoLetThemGo](#): a grassroots campaign led by the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign, Parole Preparation Project, members of the CUNY defenders clinic, and other community based groups. The campaign highlights [the faces of clemency](#) and invites supporters to [take action](#) to urge Governor Cuomo to grant clemencies for incarcerated New Yorkers, many of whom will not be parole eligible for more than a decade.
- [#FreeThemNowNY](#): Join the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice to [call, email and tweet at](#) Governor Cuomo and your state representatives to release people from prisons and jails in light of the COVID public health crisis.
- [Save Our Seniors](#): Join Color of Change in telling Governor Cuomo to release all aging people at the Adirondack Correctional Facility.
- [Testimonials from Inside during COVID-19](#): Watch members of Survived & Punished NY read letters from incarcerated comrades about the death-making conditions of confinement in New York state prisons during the pandemic.

North Carolina

Last updated: March 26, 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the miserable conditions in North Carolina's carceral system, and [new lawsuits](#) reveal that crumbling infrastructure, staffing shortages, and inadequate health care have created an ideal environment for the virus to spread in NC prisons. Almost 10,000 prison residents have contracted the virus, and at least 53 have died. In late November 2020, rising case counts and virus-related staff shortages forced the DOC to [temporarily shut down](#) three state prisons and transfer the people incarcerated there to different facilities across the state. In early December, after a lawsuit by the ACLU, a judge [ordered](#) an outside expert to oversee the state prison system's COVID-19 response and insisted on mandatory testing for correctional staff every two weeks. But county jails have been [inconsistent at best](#) in their response to the virus, with some jails not even issuing mask mandates for correctional staff. The state has allowed [several hundred incarcerated people](#) to finish the end of their sentences at home, but the governor has not implemented the sweeping emergency releases that are necessary to save lives and limit the spread of the virus. Decarcerate Now NC, a coalition of local advocates backed by the ACLU, completed a

58-day [Vigil for Freedom and Racial Justice](#) outside of the governor's mansion on New Years Day, which successfully pressured the governor to [pardon five men](#) convicted of crimes they did not commit. The coalition continues to advocate for emergency clemencies. Most incarcerated people are included in Phase 2 of the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), though medically vulnerable incarcerated people and all correctional staff are included in Phase 1b.

Call Governor Roy Cooper at (919) 814-2000

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because North Carolina has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Cooper to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Cooper at

<https://governor.nc.gov/contact/contact-governor-cooper>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Cooper,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because North Carolina has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. Close to 10,000 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and 53 have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all North Carolinians.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Cooper @NC_Governor

Close to 10,000 people in North Carolina's prisons have contracted COVID. At least 53 have died. [@NC_Governor](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **[Decarcerate Now NC:](#)** Join the ACLU and a coalition of local advocates by signing [the petition](#) to decarcerate North Carolina's jails, which are holding more than 36,000 people captive in the middle of the pandemic. Then, share [this video](#) of Decarcerate NC's Vigil for Freedom and Racial Justice that lasted everyday from Election Day until New Year's Day.
- **[Charlotte Uprising:](#)** Get involved with Charlotte Uprising, an abolitionist collective that formed in response to police brutality, and that demonstrates during the pandemic to demand decarceration in North Carolina.

North Dakota

Last updated: March 26, 2021

Early in the pandemic, North Dakota successfully avoided any COVID outbreaks in correctional facilities, largely thanks to decarceration measures the state took to [reduce its prison population by 19%](#) from January to May 2020 (the [largest reduction](#) by any state in the country during that time frame). In May, the state parole board [approved the early release](#) of 119 people. But in October, North Dakota reversed course, increasing the prison population by 3% from October 8 to November 19. Afterwards, a vicious outbreak unfolded in the James River Correctional Center, infecting more than half of the people imprisoned there by November 23. Now, at least 632 North Dakota prison residents — more than a third of the incarcerated population — have contracted the virus, and at least one incarcerated person has died. The DOC has [refused](#) to release the name of the man who died. [COVID also remains a menace in North Dakota jails](#), and has claimed the life of at least one person incarcerated in Ward County Jail. Incarcerated people are in Phase 1C of the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) and correctional staff are in Phase 1B.

Call Governor Doug Burgum at (701) 328-2200

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because North Dakota has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Burgum to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Burgum at <https://www.governor.nd.gov/contact>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Burgum,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because North Dakota has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. Though you made progress with decarceration over the spring, the number of people in state prisons has steadily increased over the past few months and now hundreds of incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least one has died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all North Dakota residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Burgum @DougBurgum

Hundreds of incarcerated people have contracted COVID in North Dakota prisons. [@DougBurgum](#) must grant emergency releases starting with medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Ohio

Last updated: March 26, 2021

In Ohio, at least 9,628 incarcerated people and 4,764 correctional employees have tested positive for COVID-19. At least 134 incarcerated people and 10 staff members have died. Ohio's death toll among incarcerated people in state prisons [is the 5th highest](#) in the nation. In April 2020, 73% of the residents of Marion Correctional Institution [tested positive](#) for the virus, making the prison the nation's [leading hotspot](#). Worse, the state has chosen to house incarcerated people in horrific conditions instead of releasing them back to their communities. In August, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) [relocated 80 women](#) at the Reformatory for Women in Marysville to a basement unit that was shut down ten years ago for safety reasons and now has moldy showers, wet ceilings, roaches, water bugs, and rats. While DRC has [claimed](#) that it reduced the state prison population by 6.5% from March to June 2020, most of this reduction comes from people aging out of their sentences. Governor DeWine has released people mainly through [a limited](#)

[release mechanism](#) that only allows people convicted of non-violent crimes with less than 90 days left in their sentences to be considered for release. In the face of multiple [lawsuits](#) calling for emergency release measures, the governor has not budged, forcing many incarcerated people to turn to judges and plead for [judicial release](#). In July 2020, the prison healthcare union SEIU District 1199 [issued a letter](#) calling for more PPE and improved staffing policies and alleged that the DRC “just gave up” on its COVID-19 response. Incarcerated people and correctional staff are included in Phase 2 of the state’s [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Mike DeWine at (614) 644-4357

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Ohio has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor DeWine to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly “chains of transmission,” bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor DeWine at

<https://governor.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/governor/contact>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor DeWine,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Ohio has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. The emergency releases you have implemented have been extremely limited and now more than 9,000 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 134 have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Buckeyes.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor DeWine @GovMikeDeWine

At least 134 people incarcerated in Ohio have died from COVID-19. [@GovMikeDeWine](#) must grant emergency releases starting with medically vulnerable people, those who have served more than half of their sentence, and those with less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Ohio Organizing Collaborative](#): Tell Governor DeWine he must act now to stop coronavirus in Ohio's jails and prisons.

Oklahoma

Last updated: March 26, 2021

For the first few months of the pandemic, the Oklahoma state prison system avoided any serious COVID-19 outbreaks, with [only 16 reported cases before July 15](#). That day, the state DOC voted to close two correctional facilities and convert a third into a work camp. Instead of releasing the people incarcerated in those facilities, the state transferred them to different prisons across the state. Between the day of the July vote and early September 2020, more than [1 out of every 5](#) people incarcerated in Oklahoma was moved to a new facility. These transfers, and the subsequent overcrowding, proved deadly. After a group of prison residents from Cimarron Correctional Facility arrived at William S. Key Correctional Center in late July and August 2020, an outbreak infected at least 82% of the prison population and [killed 2 people](#) by October 1. Over the past few months, the DOC has marked at least 15 facilities as [hotspots](#) for the virus for periods lasting as long as 67 days. Overall, more than 7,300 incarcerated people have contracted the virus, and at least 54 have died. [Calls for emergency releases](#) have gone largely unanswered. In April 2020, Governor Stitt [approved the release](#) of more than 450 prison residents, though these releases were limited to people who were convicted of non-violent crimes and had almost completed their sentences. Since then, he has not taken any action to further reduce the prison population. In fact, the state [cancelled a program](#) in November that had helped incarcerated people gain early release — this decision is projected to **increase** the prison population by 3.6% over the next two years. Incarcerated people and correctional staff are included in Phase 2 of the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Kevin Stitt at (405) 521-2342

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because Oklahoma has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Stitt to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Stitt at governor.ok.gov/contact/leave-comment

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Stitt,

My name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am writing because Oklahoma has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. The emergency releases you have implemented have been extremely limited and now more than 7,300 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 54 have died. This is a disaster of the DOC's own making — before they transferred more than 4,000 incarcerated people at the end of the summer, only 16 people in state prisons had contracted the virus. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Oklahoma residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Stitt @GovStitt

After a series of deadly transfers, more than 7,400 people in Oklahoma prisons have caught COVID. @GovStitt must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Join Ignite Justice](#) as they fight against wrongful convictions and excessive sentencing in Oklahoma. Follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- [Join Journeys to Justice, Inc.](#) as they demand answers from political and correctional authorities and demonstrate for the safety of their friends and loved ones inside during the pandemic.
- [Follow Injustice in Oklahoma Exposed](#) to learn about inhumane conditions in prisons and jails in Oklahoma, and join them in petitioning your representatives to demand change.

Oregon

Last updated: March 26, 2021

At least 3,570 incarcerated people in Oregon have tested positive for COVID-19 and 42 have died. Despite demands from local advocates, Governor Brown caved to the pressure of the Oregon District Attorneys Association and [announced](#) in April 2020 that she would not be releasing any incarcerated people due to COVID-19 risks. Later in June, Brown granted a [mere 57 commutations](#) to medically vulnerable prison residents, limiting her criteria only to those who had served more than half of their sentences and had not been convicted of a violent crime. Advocates [responded](#) that these limited releases accomplished “almost nothing,” especially after the state DOC told Brown she would need to release 5,800 people — around 40% of the state prison population — in order to create room for sufficient social distancing inside correctional facilities. In December 2020, a [federal judge](#) ruled that a group of incarcerated people had the right to sustain their lawsuit against Brown and the state DOC for their COVID-19 response, despite the state’s argument that they were protected by qualified immunity. In addition to the governor’s extremely limited releases (as of mid-December, Brown had granted only 123 commutations), Oregon has not prioritized incarcerated people or correctional staff for early & ongoing access in its [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Kate Brown at (503) 378-4582

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because Oregon has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Brown to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state’s vaccine distribution plan. Governor Brown must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly “chains of transmission,” bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Brown at

<https://www.oregon.gov/gov/Pages/share-your-opinion.aspx>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Brown,

My name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am writing because Oregon has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. You have barely released anybody from prison during the pandemic and now more than 3,500 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 42 have died. In April, the DOC told you that you would need to release 5,800 people — around 40% of the state prison population — in order to ensure adequate social distancing in correctional facilities. You failed to act then, but it is not too late to act now. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing

everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Oregon vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Oregon’s prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Oregon residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Brown @OregonGovBrown

The DOC told @OregonGovBrown in April she needed to release 5,800 people to ensure social distancing in prisons. She released 123, and now more than 3,500 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and 42 have died. Brown must grant emergency releases now. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Oregonians are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @OregonGovBrown must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of the distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **[Reduce the Number of People in Oregon Prisons:](#)** Send an email through the ACLU of Oregon’s [online form](#) urging Governor Brown to implement emergency releases.
- **[Oregon Justice Resource Center:](#)** Contact Governor Brown, your local sheriff, and the state DOC and urge them to decarcerate Oregon’s prisons and jails using [sample letters](#) prepared by Oregon Justice Resource Center (scroll down to “Advocacy resources”).
- **[Defund ICE:](#)** Send a message to Congress through the ACLU of Oregon’s [online form](#) to close Irwin County Detention Center and divest from ICE.

Pennsylvania

Last updated: March 26, 2021

For the first several months of the pandemic, Pennsylvania avoided any serious COVID-19 outbreaks in state prisons. But since late November 2020, the case count has surged dramatically, with around 4,000 cases in the first three weeks of December alone. Now, more than 9,500 incarcerated people have tested positive for the virus and at least 97 have died. In November, [more than half](#) of the residents at Laurel Highlands, a prison for elderly and infirm men, contracted COVID-19. At least eight at the facility have died. And at State Correctional Institution Dallas, one of the few facilities that implemented universal testing of incarcerated people, [more than 900 residents](#) had active infections at the end of December. Governor Wolf has authorized some emergency releases, but they have been limited. In April, the Governor ordered that the state establish a [temporary reprieve program](#), estimating that more than 1,500 people would be eligible for provisional release. But Wolf's narrow criteria, which applied only to medically vulnerable people convicted of non-violent crimes, led to the release of fewer than 150 people a month after the order was issued. And there are no guarantees that this limited decarceration will be permanent — the people released under this reprieve must finish their sentences behind bars once the governor's order expires. In late June, Wolf celebrated a net reduction in the prison population [by 3,471 people](#) since March 1st. This reduction is promising, but it is less than an 8% decrease in the prison population, and most of the releases were accomplished only through expediting the parole process for those already near the end of their sentences. The Governor has not announced any new decarceration plans in wake of the latest deadly outbreaks. Instead, the DOC has clung to mass incarceration, [instituting strict lockdown policies](#) but no staff testing mandates. Incarcerated people are included in Phase 1B of the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Tom Wolf at (717) 787-2500

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Pennsylvania has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Wolf to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Wolf at <https://www.governor.pa.gov/contact/#OnlineForm>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Wolf,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Pennsylvania has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. The emergency releases you have implemented have been extremely limited and now more than 9,500 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 97 have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable

incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release. And although decarceration is particularly important now, the public health crisis in prisons will not go away when the pandemic ends. You must ensure that everyone who is released from state prisons is **permanently** released. It is cruel to reunite people with their families for a short period of time only to re-incarcerate them for the same crime after the pandemic ends.

Immediate decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Pennsylvania residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Wolf @GovernorTomWolf

1 in 5 Pennsylvanians incarcerated in state prisons has tested positive for COVID-19, two and a half times the rate in the rest of Pennsylvania. @GovernorTomWolf must decarcerate and grant emergency releases. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

More than 9,500 people incarcerated in PA have tested positive for COVID-19. At least 97 have died. @GovernorTomWolf must grant emergency releases to prevent more avoidable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- **COVID-19 Updates from Pennsylvania Prison Society:** Click [here](#) for a comprehensive resource for advocates and loved ones of incarcerated people in Pennsylvania. The resources provided include a map of infections and weekly updates.

Rhode Island

Last updated: March 26, 2021

There have been more than 1,100 COVID-19 cases reported among incarcerated people in Rhode Island, which has a prison population of approximately 2,740. As of January 2021, only [52 people](#) had been released from prisons over the course of the pandemic, and all released persons had 90 days or fewer left in their sentences, which were short-term and for nonviolent offenses. In one particularly hard-hit facility, the maximum-security unit in the Adult Correctional Institutions in Cranston, [331 out of 354 incarcerated people and 59 staff had tested positive](#) for the virus as of

December 2020. On Saturday, December 19, a 66-year-old man in this unit became the first person to die from complications of COVID-19 inside prisons in the state. At the time of his death, Jeffrey Washington, held at the ACI since 1988, was appealing his life-without-parole sentence. Rhode Island's interim [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes incarcerated people and correctional employees in Phase 2 of distribution (p.12), while those who are [high-risk due to age or medical conditions](#) will be part of Phase 1.2.

Call Governor Gina Raimondo at (401) 490-0951

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Rhode Island has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Raimondo to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor at governor@governor.ri.gov

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Raimondo,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Rhode Island has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 40% of the people incarcerated in state prisons have contracted the virus and you have released almost no one. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

Immediate decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Rhode Island residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Raimondo @GovRaimondo

In Rhode Island, more than 40% of people incarcerated in state prisons have tested positive for COVID-19. [@GovRaimondo](#) must grant emergency releases, starting with medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [#DecarcerateNOW](#): Organized by [RI COVID Response](#), this campaign demands that prisons and police be defunded and dismantled. To take action, call your Providence City Council representative using [this script](#), follow the campaign's [Facebook page](#), and text RESPONSE to 94502 to receive updates from the campaign manager.
- [Support Code Black Rhode Island](#), a group of health workers against racism in their fight for equity for Black lives. Code Black RI has organized protests against inhumane conditions at ACI during the pandemic.

South Carolina

Last updated: March 26, 2021

More than 3,200 COVID-19 cases have been reported [among incarcerated people in South Carolina](#), and at least 40 people incarcerated have died of the virus. Additionally, there have been more than 1,000 cases and at least two deaths among correctional employees. The [South Carolina Department of Corrections \(SCDC\) COVID-19 Action Plan](#), released in March of 2020, failed to outline steps for releasing incarcerated people and neglected even to call for a reduced prison population, a necessary strategy to slow the spread of COVID-19 inside correctional facilities. In March, state Supreme Court Chief Justice Donald Beatty [directed](#) courts to release incarcerated people who were convicted of nonviolent crimes. However, as of March 2021, the governor has not significantly reduced the prison population. In April 2020, the ACLU of South Carolina filed a lawsuit to urge the SCDC to release medically vulnerable people and increase protections for incarcerated people. Months later, reports from inside state prisons reveal [inhumane conditions](#) where incarcerated people are able to take fewer than three showers a week and remain cramped in overcrowded rooms. The only prison workers or residents explicitly mentioned in South Carolina's formal [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) are prison medical providers, who are included in Phase 1A, but Governor McMaster [released](#) a list on December 9, 2020 that includes incarcerated people and non-medical correctional employees in Phase 1B of distribution.

Call Governor Henry McMaster at (803) 734-2100

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because South Carolina has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor McMaster to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor McMaster at

https://iqconnect.lmhostediq.com/iqextranet/EForm.aspx?_cid=FSL_SC_GOV&_fid=100000

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor McMaster,

My name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am writing because South Carolina has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. You have barely released anybody from prison during the pandemic and now more than 3,200 incarcerated people have contracted the virus and at least 40 have died. More people will die if you do not act now. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

Releasing people from South Carolina's prisons will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all South Carolina residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor McMaster @henrymcmaster

More than 3,200 incarcerated people in South Carolina have contracted COVID and at least 40 have died. @henrymcmaster must grant releases, starting with medically vulnerable people, those who have served more than half of their sentence, and those with less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

South Dakota

Last updated: March 26, 2021

In South Dakota state prisons, 2 out of every 3 people incarcerated have tested positive for COVID-19, almost 5 times the rate of the state's population. At least 2,340 COVID-19 cases and seven deaths have been [reported](#) among people in prisons, in addition to at least 189 positive cases among correctional staff. Governor Kristi Noem and the Department of Corrections have [maintained](#) since March 2020 that they will not authorize special releases due to COVID-19. This means that, despite [at least 62.3%](#) of the South Dakota prison population having tested positive for the virus, the state has refused to take any measures to lower the number of people becoming ill in its custody. South Dakota's 62.3% positivity rate among incarcerated people is more than three times the nationwide

rate for incarcerated people, which is itself more than four times the rate of 5.0% in the general U.S. population. An incarcerated individual in a South Dakota correctional facility is thus more than 12 times more likely to contract the virus when compared to the national average. While correctional staff are prioritized in Phase 1C in the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), incarcerated people are not explicitly assigned a phase. Although those living in "congregate settings" will receive vaccine access in Phase 1D, prisons are not among the institutions listed as such settings (p.37; p.12).

Call Governor Kristi Noem at (605) 773-3212

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because South Dakota has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Noem to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Governor McMaster must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Noem at

https://iqconnect.lmhostediq.com/iqextranet/EForm.aspx?_cid=FSL_SD_GOV&_fid=2100060

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Noem,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because South Dakota has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. At least 2 out of every 3 people incarcerated in your prisons have become infected, almost 5 times the rate of infection in South Dakota as a whole. At least seven incarcerated people have died from the virus, and more will die if you do not act now. You have refused to reduce the prison population during this crisis, but I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the South Dakota vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission

of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from South Dakota's prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all South Dakota residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Noem @govkristinoem

In South Dakota, 2 out of every 3 people in state prisons have contracted COVID-19. That's about 5 times the rate on the outside. @govkristinoem must grant emergency releases. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated South Dakota residents are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @govkristinoem must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of the distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Tennessee

Last updated: March 26, 2021

At least 6,634 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Tennessee prisons and jails, and at least 42 incarcerated people have died from the virus. Although some counties have released people at a local level and on a case-by-case basis, there has been no state-level effort to reduce the incarcerated population. In late August 2020, there was a [major outbreak](#) at South Central Correctional Facility, a private prison run by CoreCivic. Over the course of two days, 1,410 people were tested, and at least 1,144 results came back positive, meaning the positivity rate was greater than 80 percent. This was not even Tennessee's largest outbreak in a correctional facility; earlier, [over 1,800 people tested positive](#) for the virus at Trousdale Turner Correctional Center, which is also run by CoreCivic. [As of early September 2020](#), about 77% of COVID-19 cases and half of the deaths in the state prison system could be attributed to CoreCivic's facilities, despite the fact that the company houses just over one-third of incarcerated Tennesseans. Tennessee's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) includes both incarcerated people and correctional staff in Phase 2A of distribution.

Call Governor Bill Lee at (615) 741-2001

Hello, my name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am calling because Tennessee has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Lee to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable

incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Lee: <https://www.tn.gov/governor/contact-us.html>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Lee,

My name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am writing because Tennessee has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. The virus has spread unchecked in Tennessee facilities, including at South Central Correctional Facility, where there was an 80% positivity rate during one outbreak. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Tennessee residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Lee @GovBillLee

More than 6,600 incarcerated Tennesseans have fallen ill due to the rampant spread of COVID-19 in state prisons and jails. @GovBillLee must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Texas

Last updated: March 26, 2021

Texas trails only California and the federal B.O.P. in the number of people catching COVID-19 in its prisons, with at least 34,344 people falling ill. At least 187 people have died from COVID in state prisons, the third highest death toll in state prison systems. Despite putting people incarcerated to work [producing cheap masks](#) for the use of people on the outside, the [state prison system had to be](#)

[sued](#) before it would provide masks and hand sanitizer to everyone in its custody. Texas jails have also seen major outbreaks of the virus. Since the start of the pandemic, Harris County jail in Houston has been home to some of the worst outbreaks in the nation, [spurring panic among people inside](#). [As late as January 2021](#), the jail remained dangerously close to 100% capacity, allowing for no social distancing, and [more than 2,000 people](#) incarcerated there had tested positive. One man [wrote](#), “Being locked up with no fighting chance is wrong. Most of us don’t have life sentences to have a death sentence because of lack of medical supplies, basically it’s like sitting on death row.” Early efforts to reduce the incarcerated population across the state were blocked by Governor Abbott, who issued an [executive order](#) that prevented the release of individuals unable to afford bail and accused or previously convicted of a violent crime, regardless of medical condition or good conduct. This executive order was challenged in court but ultimately upheld by the Texas Supreme Court. Later, a district court judge’s ruling [temporarily blocked](#) Governor Abbott’s order on the grounds that it violated the constitutional separation of powers and kept individuals detained on the basis of their ability to pay cash bail. Residents and staff of correctional facilities are not explicitly assigned a phase in Texas’ [vaccine distribution plan](#), though they are identified as members of the “vulnerable and frontline population.”

Call Governor Abbott at (512) 463-2000

Hello, my name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am calling because Texas has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Abbott to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of Texas’s vaccine distribution plan. Governor Abbott must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly “chains of transmission,” bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Abbott: <https://gov.texas.gov/apps/contact/opinion.aspx>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Abbott,

My name is [\[your name\]](#) and I live in [\[city/town\]](#). I am writing because Texas has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. More than 34,000 incarcerated Texans have contracted COVID-19, and at least 187 have died. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of the Texas vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Texas prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Texas residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Abbott @GovAbbott

More than 34,000 incarcerated Texans have contracted COVID and at least 187 have died. @GovAbbott must grant emergency releases to the medically vulnerable and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Texans are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. @GovAbbott must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of Texas's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources:

- [Support the Statewide Leadership Counsel](#), formerly incarcerated leaders with the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, by protesting and petitioning for the protection of people incarcerated in Texas jails, prisons, and juvenile detention facilities.
- [Follow Keri Blakinger](#), a Texan and journalist with the Marshall Project, as she sheds light on the conditions of incarceration in Texas during the pandemic as documented by her correspondents inside.
- [Explore the Texas After Violence Project's](#) archives and build a deeper understanding of the impact of state-sanctioned violence. Be sure to look at their [Sheltering Justice Archive](#), telling stories at the intersection of COVID-19 and incarceration.
- [Follow the Texas Justice Initiative](#) for detailed data on the state of mass incarceration in Texas prisons and jails.

Utah

Last updated: March 27, 2021

Though Utah correctional facilities managed to evade major outbreaks throughout the spring and summer, in the fall of 2020 they became COVID-19 hotspots. At least 3,442 cases and 16 deaths have been [reported](#) among the state's incarcerated population. In the Utah State Prison alone, there have been at least [1,763 positive cases](#), making it one of the largest prison outbreaks in the country. Early in the pandemic, the Utah Department of Corrections made arrangements to [release 80 incarcerated individuals](#), all of whom were within 90 days of completing their sentences. Several county jails also lowered their populations after the chief justice of the Utah Supreme Court [temporarily canceled all jury trials](#), and some sheriffs have instructed officers to [ticket people](#) instead of arresting them for lower-level crimes. Staff and residents at correctional facilities will be included in Phase 2 of Utah's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Spencer J. Cox at (801) 538-1000

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Utah has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Cox to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Cox at

<https://servicecloudtrial-155c0807bf-158b6dc6793.force.com/governor/s/comments>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Cox,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Utah has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. More than 3,400 incarcerated people have contracted the virus. An 86-year-old was recently the eleventh incarcerated person to die of COVID-19 in Utah. His life could have been saved if he was released and able to properly social distance. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest

outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Utah residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Cox @SpencerJCox

More than 3,400 people have contracted COVID-19 while incarcerated in Utah. Gov @SpencerJCox must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Vermont

Last updated: March 27, 2021

455 people incarcerated in Vermont state prisons have contracted the virus as of March 2021. At the start of the pandemic, [1,630 people](#) were incarcerated in Vermont prisons. As of April 2020, the prison population decreased by 300 through a combination of regular releases and pandemic-specific policy changes. Although no incarcerated people are reported to have died of the virus, it appears that the extreme social isolation of quarantining in prison led a [36-year-old man](#) to commit suicide at the Northeast Correctional Complex in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. Advocates also expressed concern about prison conditions during a [virus-related lockdown](#) at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility in early December 2020. The women inside the prison were locked in their cells and were not told that a staff member had tested positive until two days after the lockdown began. It is unclear what level of priority Vermont's three-phase vaccination process will give to incarcerated people. The state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#) says that incarcerated people could be included in Phase 1 or Phase 2 (p. 30).

Call Governor Phil Scott at (802) 828-3333

Hello, my name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am calling because Vermont has failed to adequately protect the physical and mental well-being of incarcerated people during the pandemic. I urge Governor Scott to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Scott at <https://governor.vermont.gov/email>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Scott,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Vermont has failed to adequately protect the physical and mental well-being of incarcerated people during the pandemic. For example, the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility was recently locked down after a staff member contracted the virus. Not only were incarcerated women endangered by this staff member, but they were kept in their cells for 48 hours without explanation. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Vermont residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Scott @GovPhilScott

Hundreds of incarcerated people in Vermont have contracted COVID-19. [@GovPhilScott](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Letter By Letter NH/VT](#): Help to send a letter to every single person incarcerated in Vermont and New Hampshire, including those sent to out-of-state facilities, with Letter by Letter NH/VT.

Virginia

Last updated: March 27, 2021

On April 8, 2020, the [ACLU](#) sued Virginia for failing to release medically vulnerable people from prison during the pandemic. Later that month, the state legislature passed a [budget amendment](#) permitting the early release of certain people with less than a year left on their sentences. Upwards of [1,600 people](#) had been approved for early release as of December 21, 2020. Unfortunately, this is a small fraction of Virginia's [30,000](#) person prison population. Moreover, hundreds of [releases have been delayed](#), often because people lack post-release housing. There have been at least 9,008 coronavirus cases among incarcerated people, and at least 6 deaths. As of January 2021, the largest

number of deaths had occurred at the [Deerfield Correctional Complex](#), where much of the population is elderly or otherwise medically vulnerable. The virus has also flared in state jails — more than half of the 800 people incarcerated at [Middle River Regional Jail](#) were infected in December of 2020. The virus has also spread through Virginia's Farmville immigration prison, where it has taken the life of at least one detainee. According to the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#), Virginia's vaccinations will be carried out in three phases and incarcerated people are included in [Phase 1B](#) of the rollout plan.

Call Governor Ralph Northam at (804) 786-2211

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Virginia has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. Governor Northam must immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Northam at

<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/constituent-services/communicating-with-the-governors-office/>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Northam,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Virginia has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

These decarceration measures will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Virginia residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Northam @GovernorVA

More than 9,000 incarcerated Virginians have contracted COVID and at least 56 have died. @GovernorVA must grant emergency releases, starting with the medically vulnerable, those who have served half of their sentence, and those who have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources:

- **[Free Them All VA](#):** support the Free Them All VA coalition, which amplifies the demands of folx organizing for liberation from Virginia detention centers, jails, and prisons. The coalition formed last year in support of detained folks organizing for their release from ICA-Farmville, a private detention center that became home to the largest COVID-19 outbreak at a migrant detention center in the country. You can read more about the coalition's work and find action steps at linktr.ee/FTAVA.

Washington

Last updated: March 27, 2021

As of March 2021, at least 6,187 incarcerated people in Washington state have tested positive for the virus and fourteen have died. Columbia Legal Services [sued Governor Inslee](#) in early April to force him to release thousands of people, but their lawsuit was rejected. Inslee still released around [1,100 people](#), but limited releases to those who were incarcerated for non-violent crimes and who were nearing the end of their sentence. In the winter of 2020-2021, COVID-19 infections in state prisons exploded. In early December, Stafford Creek Correctional Center experienced a [2,000% case increase](#) in a matter of two days. The state prison in Shelton was described by the wife of a resident as “the Department of Corrections’ overcrowded COVID station.” As of March 2021, 1 in 3 people in state prisons had tested positive for the virus, a rate more than 7 times higher than the rate of infection in Washington state as a whole. Incarcerated people and correctional staff will receive the vaccine in Phase 2, according to Washington’s [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Jay Inslee at (360) 902-4111

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Washington has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. I urge Governor Inslee to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Inslee at

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/contact/contact/send-gov-inslee-e-message>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Inslee,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Washington has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19. You have announced no plans to release more incarcerated Washingtonians despite the fact that people incarcerated are falling ill to COVID-19 at 7 times the rate of the general population. It is great that you released people in April in anticipation of disastrous outbreaks in state prisons, but you must act again. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

This decarceration will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These emergency releases will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Washington residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Inslee @GovInslee

More than 6,100 people have contracted COVID-19 while incarcerated in Washington, falling ill from the virus at 7 times the rate of other Washingtonians. [@GovInslee](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources:

- [Join The Truth is Inside Out](#) as they organize against mass incarceration in Washington state, elevate the voices of people incarcerated, and demand mass releases and access to vaccines for incarcerated people during the coronavirus pandemic.

West Virginia

Last updated: March 27, 2021

There have been more than 1,500 virus cases and nine deaths among people incarcerated in West Virginia's prisons and jails. Despite a new state law intended to reduce the number of people detained pretrial, [very few people](#) have been freed from jails or prisons since the start of the

pandemic ([less than 100](#) out of the prison population of 6,800). As of August 2020, [57%](#) of the people in West Virginia's overcrowded jails were detained because they couldn't make bail. West Virginia is notable for its relatively large number of federal prisons. According to the [Prison Policy Initiative](#), more people are incarcerated in West Virginia's federal prisons than its state or local prisons. As of January 2021, there were [active COVID-19 cases](#) in six federal prisons in the state. The COVID-19 vaccine is being distributed in two phases in West Virginia. Correctional officers are set to be included in phase 1B, but the state has [no plans to vaccinate](#) incarcerated people, who do not appear in their [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Jim Justice at (304) 558-2000

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because West Virginia has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also prioritizing correctional staff for vaccine access significantly earlier than incarcerated people. There is no medical evidence that staff vaccinations will be enough to limit the spread of the virus. I urge Governor Justice to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 of the vaccine distribution plan. The governor must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Justice at

<https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wv/governor/contactus>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Justice,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because West Virginia has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also prioritizing correctional staff for vaccine access significantly earlier than incarcerated people. West Virginia is holding thousands of people in prisons and jails as the virus continues to spread, including many people who are jailed solely because they cannot make bail. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

It is great that you plan to prioritize correctional staff for early vaccine access, but there is no medical evidence that staff vaccinations alone will be enough to limit the spread of the virus. You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing

access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 of the West Virginia vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from West Virginia prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all West Virginia residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Justice @WVGovernor

More than 1,500 people incarcerated in West Virginia have contracted COVID-19. @WVGovernor must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Providing early vaccine access to correctional employees is not enough to stop the deadly spread of COVID-19 in West Virginia prisons. @WVGovernor must prioritize incarcerated people in Phase 1 of the distribution plan to avoid more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Wisconsin

Last updated: March 27, 2021

At least 10,903 incarcerated people have contracted COVID-19 in Wisconsin state prisons and at least 25 have died of the virus. As of March 2021, 1 in 2 people in state prisons had fallen ill with COVID-19, a rate 4 times that of the general population in the state. In December 2020, [a large outbreak](#) took place at Fox Lake Correctional Institution, where there were nearly 500 positive cases. Governor Evers has [failed to significantly reduce the prison population](#). The state also has not implemented a pandemic release program, and as of September, [just four](#) out of 140 compassionate release requests had been granted. Governor Evers has also not used his [clemency powers](#) to a significant extent. This has had tragic results, as [people have passed away needlessly](#) in an overcrowded system. In April, the [ACLU](#) petitioned the state to release medically vulnerable incarcerated people, but the Wisconsin Supreme Court denied their request. The Wisconsin DOC has been very reluctant to release information about COVID-19's spread in prisons, taking [weeks or months to confirm](#) a COVID-19 death, and [only beginning to publish its death toll](#) 11 months after the start of the pandemic. Incarcerated people are not mentioned in the state's [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Tony Evers at (608) 266-1212

Hello, my name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am calling because Wisconsin has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Evers to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1B of the state's vaccine distribution plan. Governor Evers must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Evers at

<https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wi/governor/voice-an-opinion>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Evers,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Wisconsin has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. The state has not implemented a pandemic release program, and people have died needlessly in your overcrowded, inhuman prison system.. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1B of Wisconsin's vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Wisconsin prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Wisconsin residents.

Thank you,

[your name]

Tweet at Governor Evers @GovEvers

@GovEvers has yet to use his clemency powers to save the lives of ill and aging people in Wisconsin prisons. He must grant emergency releases, starting with the medically vulnerable and those who have served half of their sentence and have less than a year left. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Incarcerated Wisconsinites are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19, falling ill at 4 times the rate of others in the state. @GovEvers must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1B of Wisconsin's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. #FightCOVIDinPrisons

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Join MOSES: Madison Organizing in Strength, Equality, and Solidarity](#) an interfaith organization that has organized vigils and other actions to draw attention to the crisis in Wisconsin prisons during the pandemic.

Wyoming

Last updated: March 27, 2021

At least 846 incarcerated people and 292 prison staff in Wyoming had contracted COVID-19 as of March 2021. Three people incarcerated in state prisons have died. Wyoming [received an F](#) from the Prison Policy Initiative with regards to the state's COVID-19 response. Department of Corrections Director Dan Shannon has refused to share his COVID-19 emergency plan with the public. Moreover, as of December 15, Governor Gordon [has not taken any action](#) to encourage the release of medically vulnerable people or people nearing the end of their sentences. Incarcerated people are not mentioned in Wyoming's three-phase [Vaccine Distribution Plan](#).

Call Governor Mark Gordon at (307) 777-7434

Hello, my name is [your name] and I live in [city/town]. I am calling because Wyoming has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the COVID vaccine. I urge Governor Gordon to follow the advice of medical experts and include incarcerated people in Phase 1 or 2 of Wyoming's vaccine distribution plan. Governor Gordon must also immediately reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left. This will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives, but it will also strategically interrupt the most deadly "chains of transmission," bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. Thank you.

Email Governor Gordon at <https://governor.wyo.gov/contact>

Note: Adding a unique sentence at the start of your email will help ensure someone reads it.

Dear Governor Gordon,

My name is **[your name]** and I live in **[city/town]**. I am writing because Wyoming has failed to adequately protect incarcerated people from COVID-19 and is also not guaranteeing them early & ongoing access to the vaccine. 2 in 5 incarcerated people in Wyoming state prisons have contracted COVID-19. I urge you to follow the advice of medical experts and reduce the prison population, starting with granting emergency clemencies to medically vulnerable incarcerated people and releasing everyone who has served more than half of their sentence and has less than a year left.

To truly make an impact, it is important that these releases go beyond releasing those who have committed non-violent crimes. Some of the most vulnerable in our prisons are elderly people who have been incarcerated for decades for a violent crime but do not pose any threat to society — they must also be eligible for release.

You must also prioritize incarcerated people for early & ongoing access to the vaccine by including them in Phase 1 or 2 of Wyoming's vaccine distribution plan. Consistent with public health goals, this decision will reduce the transmission of the virus, prevent deaths, and advance health equity. It is also a moral obligation to protect those you have chosen to keep in your custody during this deadly pandemic.

Releasing people from Wyoming prisons and prioritizing incarcerated people for the vaccine will not only stem the spread of the virus and save lives within prisons, but since prisons have been shown to create some of the deadliest outbreaks in surrounding communities, it will protect us all from illness and death. These safety measures will also bring down medical expenses, ease pressure on local healthcare systems, and reduce health inequities. In times of crisis, you have an obligation to protect all Wyoming residents.

Thank you,
[your name]

Tweet at Governor Gordon @GovernorGordon

2 in 5 incarcerated Wyomingites have contracted COVID-19. [@GovernorGordon](#) must grant emergency releases to medically vulnerable people and those who have served more than half of their sentence and have less than a year left. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Incarcerated Wyomingites are among those most vulnerable to illness and death from COVID-19. [@GovernorGordon](#) must guarantee early and ongoing access to the vaccine in Phase 1 or 2 of Wyoming's distribution plan to avoid even more preventable deaths. [#FightCOVIDinPrisons](#)

Active state campaigns and advocacy resources

- [Join Wyo Say No](#), a grassroots coalition in Wyoming resisting a proposed immigration prison in Uinta County, and acting in solidarity with people detained throughout the country during this pandemic. Follow them on [Facebook](#) and [sign their petition](#).