

April 14, 2020

Dear Governor Hogan:

We are urgently following up the letter we, along with more than 200 Johns Hopkins medical and public health faculty, sent on March 25<sup>th</sup> regarding COVID-19 in Maryland's prisons and jails. Our letter called on your administration to release high risk inmates who pose no threat to the public safety of the community. Release is appropriate both as a public health measure and to protect these individuals from infection and possible death. With nearly 100 confirmed cases, and the death of one incarcerated person already, it is likely that many more deaths will follow unless those who are most vulnerable are released with transition planning into situations where they can protect themselves from the virus.

As our March 25<sup>th</sup> letter sets out, considerations of public health require reducing the population within correctional institutions as well as implementing hygiene and distancing measures. Lives are at stake: incarcerated individuals are sentenced and detained to deprive them of liberty but not to heighten the risk of severe illness or death.

Moreover, the health and lives of thousands of people who work in prisons and jails as well as their families are at stake. Current data show that correctional staff have higher rates of confirmed COVID-19 cases than residents in any county in Maryland.

The processes for identifying incarcerated people who are most vulnerable to COVID-19 are straightforward and outlined in the joint proposal between the State Attorney's office and public health practitioners sent to your office on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Public safety reviews and discharge plans can be accomplished on expedited basis. [Fourteen states](#) and numerous local jails have already taken these steps. Additionally, at the initiative of Attorney General William Barr, the Federal Bureau of Prisons is reviewing all inmates with COVID-19 risk factors for suitability for home confinement.

There is no time to waste. We urge you to act without further delay.

Sincerely,

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