RE: Executive Order to protect health and safety of Marylanders in our places of detention

Dear Governor Hogan,

We write to urge you to take immediate action to address the significant risk of COVID-19 associated with people in detention and employed in Maryland’s prisons and jails. It is widely acknowledged among public health experts that people in prisons and jails are particularly vulnerable to the spread of the virus, and yet least able to protect themselves without state action.

To date, the State has provided little to no information about steps to protect the spread and impact of COVID-19 as to Marylanders incarcerated and employed in our prisons and jails, other than eliminating visits. Persons confined in prisons and jails are uniquely vulnerable to the coronavirus because of the inability to practice social distancing, lack of adequate sanitation, and the constant influx of new people from outside. In courts around the State, your silence on the health and safety in people in jails and prisons is being cited by prosecutors to argue for the continued detention of pre-trial defendants, in contravention of clear public health standards.

Just as is the case in the non-incarcerated community, every moment and every opportunity to avoid the spread of the virus, and to mitigate the risks it poses to the most vulnerable, is critical. Likewise, people who are at greater risk for contracting and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 – older adults, individuals with serious chronic medical conditions, and those who are otherwise immune-compromised – are among those in Maryland prisons and jails. And the lack of adequate medical care in such facilities creates the perfect storm for harm when the virus enters them.

We offer specific proposals that are grounded in public health, common sense, and appropriate legal authorities. Many of these proposals have been adopted in jurisdictions around the country and/or have been proposed by Maryland residents and leaders in the past weeks. We urge you to issue an executive order that:

1. **U unequivocally rejects baseless claims that people are safer in jails and prisons than in the community.**

   Public health officials have advocated for reducing detained and imprisoned populations for whom confined space, restriction of movement, and limited access to healthcare amplifies the introduction and spread of the virus.

2. **U Urges all law enforcement and correctional agencies, state’s attorneys and members of the judiciary to take every step possible to avoid adding to the number of people incarcerated in any kind of detention and to expedite any steps to reduce the number of people, particularly those at risk of serious illness or death if they contract the virus; Examples of feasible steps include:**
State’s Attorneys: To avoid needless pretrial incarceration, and for individuals at high risk and those with lesser offenses, SAOs should dismiss charges, allow the person charged to be released, and refile them (if they choose) at a later date.

Law enforcement: Agencies with arresting authority should limit arrests and detentions and should forego arrests for minor offenses or issue citations in lieu of arrest so that people can return home, balancing the need for arrest with the overwhelming public safety concerns presented by coronavirus and limiting the risk of bringing someone who may have the virus into a station.

Courts: Courts can clarify that any hearing that can result in someone’s release from prison/jail, such as successive bail reviews and modification of sentences, are “emergency” proceedings that require a hearing; and that judges should freely reopen matters as needed to permit release;

Community supervision & Corrections: Local and state correctional agencies (including those housing youth and immigrant detainees) can utilize their authority to expedite and maximize the number of people who can be immediately released outright or on remote supervision, with a heightened focus on those at greatest risk of harm.

3. Orders the Maryland Parole Commission to expedite and expand release opportunities for those whose sentence will soon expire, for those serving short sentences, and for those at greatest risk of serious illness.

The MPC should expedite and expand release opportunities for incarcerated people, expedite the release of people already found suitable for release on parole, expedite all review processes for people eligible for parole, and make aggressive use of its recently-expanded authority to grant administrative parole per Md. Code Ann., Corr. Servs. § 7-301.1. In addition, the MPC should expedite and give great weight to requests for medical parole, including a presumption of release for anyone who falls within the vulnerability criteria identified by the CDC.

4. Authorizes Parole & Probation to limit required in-person contact and avoid incarceration for technical or minor violations.

Maryland’s centralized system of parole and probation presents a significant advantage in your ability to quickly implement needed changes. We urge you to:

   a. Direct agents to cease in-person check-ins to accommodate the need for social distancing, and to allow check-ins to occur by voice or video call. Where those technologies are not accessible to a person under supervision, minimize or temporarily suspend check-in requirements.
b. Suspend enforcement of any mobility-restricting supervision conditions that impede a person’s ability to seek medical care or to support loved ones who may have COVID-19.

c. Limit the number of people being incarcerated by suspending detainers and incarceration for technical (rule violations).

5. Utilizes your clemency authority to release geriatric and other particularly vulnerable prisoners who present little to no risk to public safety and those slated to be released within two years.

In addition to those who have already been recommended for release by the MPC, we urge you to use your broad clemency authority to facilitate the safe release to those identified by the CDC as particularly vulnerable and those who have two years or less remaining on their sentences.

6. Requires every place of detention, whether operated by the State or not, and including those housing federal detainees to:

   a. Develop a publicly-accessible COVID-19 response plan in consultation with local public health authorities that does not rely upon restrictive housing or lengthy facility-wide lockdowns as the primary control measure;

   b. Make provision for education about sanitizing and adequate supplies of soap, hand sanitizer, tissues and other hygiene and cleaning supplies, and ensure that all products are freely available to all people in the facility, even if this requires suspending prohibitions on alcohol to accommodate hand sanitizer distribution;

   c. Implement clear procedures to care for those who become ill, including, at minimum, screening and testing of people for COVID-19, based on the most up to date information available; increased access to medical care and waiving of all copays; access to the medication and equipment necessary to treat those who contract the virus; and, the ability to immediately transfer sick patients to outside facilities for care when necessary;

   d. Assess detainees to identify and provide for additional precautions for those who are at greatest risk of serious illness upon contracting COVID-19;

   e. Describe how and where people in the prison system will be housed if they are exposed to the virus, are at high risk of serious illness if they become infected, or become sick with it. This should not result in prolonged, widespread lock-downs. Any lock-downs or interruptions in regular activities, such as programming, exercise or visits and phone calls with families or attorneys, should be based solely on the best science available and should be as limited as possible in scope and duration. Every effort should be made to maintain programming, including alternatives such as remote programming. Other forms of communication such as emails, voice calls, and video calls should be made
free for all incarcerated people, and the right to legal communication must not be curtailed;

f. Adequate staffing planning, including staffing by those who are in custody doing facility jobs, for how necessary functions and services will continue if large numbers of staff (including people in custody who staff such functions) are incapacitated by the virus.

7. **Orders the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Department of Juvenile Services to take additional steps.**

   a. Publicly identify specific steps taken to protect people in detention and staff;

   b. Provide a landing page with updates by facility along the lines of that created by the Maryland judiciary for the courts, that describes how the facility is maintaining communication, commissary, recreation and access to medical;


   d. Identify additional mechanisms to facilitate depopulation, such as liberal use of home and family leave, furloughs, and the like.

These proposals are not exhaustive, but they represent a sampling of straightforward steps the State can take to mitigate the risk of COVID-19. Just as you have taken steps to ensure that Marylanders heed public health experts’ advice in the community, we hope you will take steps to avoid a public health crisis in our prisons and jails.

Sincerely,

**Organizational Signatories**

ACLU of Maryland
ACLU of Maryland, Montgomery County Chapter
Adventist Prison & Health Reform Advocates Coalition
Aging People in Prison Human Rights Campaign
American Friends Service Committee
Baltimore County Justice Coalition
Baltimore Democratic Socialists of America
CASA
Congregation Action Network
Disability Rights Maryland
Grand Rapids Area Mutual Aid Network
GR Rapid Response to ICE
Indivisible Howard County  
Interfaith Action for Human Rights  
Jews United for Justice  
Johns Hopkins University Sit-in  
Law Enforcement Action Partnership  
Lifer Family Support Network  
Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform  
Maryland CURE  
Maryland Office of the Public Defender  
Maryland Prisoners’ Rights Coalition  
Maryland State Bar Association, Council for Correctional Reform  
Montgomery County Democratic Socialists of America  
Northwestern Prison Education Program  
Organizing Black Inc.  
Out for Justice, Inc.  
Prison Health News  
Project for Transgender Incarcerated Survivors  
Public Justice Center  
Reproductive Justice Inside  
RISE Coalition of Western Maryland  
Sex Workers Outreach Project - Baltimore  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore  
Together We Are Safe  
University of Maryland Carey Immigration Clinic  
University of Maryland School of Law Gender Violence Clinic  
University of Maryland School of Law Gender Violence Clinic  
Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs  
Youth, Education and Justice Clinic, University of Maryland Carey School of Law  
Youth Empowered Society  

**Individual Signatories:**

DaNia Henry, Georgetown University Law Center  
Angela Mcknight  
Alfred Chestnut  
Lydia Watts, The Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center at UMB  
Alec Konstantin  
Abbe Smith, Professor of Law, Georgetown University  
Jessica Poliarco  
Juanita Corbett-Youngkin  
Rev. Kobi Little, Justice Chapel  
Warren Rymes  
Mica McNair  
Tomiko Shine  
Amanda Collier  
Rosa Collier
Margaret Martin Barry, Visiting Professor of Law, American University Washington College of Law  
Lizzie Spradley  
Alexandria Kirchhoff Corrie  
Molly  
Laura Grothaus  
Brian Slocum  
Jeremy Penn  
Kathleen Hoke, Public Health Law Clinic at Maryland Carey Law  
Angel Dawson  
Anika Hamilton  
Rachel Burris, LMSW  
Maggie Ambrose  
Jessica Handy, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health  
Jess Nesbitt  
Sara Gold, Medical-Legal Partnership Clinic, University of Maryland Carey School of Law  
Katharine Evans, LMSW  
Maryland Plant-based Advocates Coalition - Jo Saint-George, Esq.  
Eileen Benecke  
Rev. Dr. Eliezer Valentin-Castanon, Trinity UMC  
Jennifer Kirschner  
Jess Ahart - Communities United  
Veronica Saltzman  
Jenny Roberts, Professor of Law and Co-Director, Criminal Justice Clinic, American University Washington College of Law  
Savannah Fisher  
Laurie Liskin  
Kelci Reiss  
Kristy Blalock, Gaudenzia Inc.  
Keith Lucia  
Delegate Nicole Williams  
Lizzy Unger  
Whitney Yang / US Human Rights Network  
Eric E. Sterling, Executive Director, Criminal Justice Policy Foundation  
Adjua Pryor - Georgetown University Law Student  
Sarah Nesbitt  
Rosalie Eck  
Joe Thomas Georgetown Parity Project  
Matthew Williams  
Anne Sawyer  
Kayla Tormohlen  
Tiffany Williams  
Shannon Mellott  
Autumn Morrison  
Perika Lancadter  
Jessi Ahart - Communities United
Kizzy Diggs Dorsey Run Facility & Md Correctional Training Center
Mishawn
Charissee Lue
Susan A. Verbalis
Jia Ahmad, Policy Analyst, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health
Sachini Bandara Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Sally Dworak-Fisher, Baltimore City Resident
James Foulds, Assistant Professor of Information Systems, UMBC
Rabbi Simon Stratford, Congregation Kol Ami of Frederick
Susan Sheinfeld
Charelle Pelmore
Emily Blank
Tonya Pratt
Denise Brooks
Onyinye Alheri
Pearlie Barnes
Tifani Lively
Micah Pratt
Ishyne Pratt
Rabbi Simon Stratford, Congregation Kol Ami of Frederick
Marilyn Carlisle
Adrienne Potter Yoe
Lea Green, President of Marylandcure & Lea Green, mother of a Lifer
Hester Pack-Marylandcure
Noa Krawczyk
Michele Levy
Carolyn Cullison, On Our Own of St. Mary's Inc.
Hannah Mueller
Elli Bloomberg
Miner L Brown
marcia daniel - Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
Emily Blank
Deloris Gordon
Andrew J. Miller
Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Laurel Hoa, Showing Up for Racial Justice - Montgomery County, MD
Arthur Milholland, M.D.
Amanda Latimore PhD, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Carly Wais
Maryjoel davis, second chance for women
Thomas McCarthy
Michael Gerlach
Ellen Weber Legal Action Center
Hannah Lin
Jeremy Gombin-Sperling Jews United for Justice
Jean Athey, Maryland Peace Action
Elizabeth Finne, Second Chance for Women
Bevery Winstead, University of Maryland, Carey School of Law
Desiree Tucker, Women Solve
Mark Wolff, JUFJ
Donna Palmer
Kitty Maynard, Kent and Queen Anne's Indivisible
Damien Haussling (Private Citizen)
Eva D Bankard
Charles James III
Blair Franklin, Executive Director, Youth Empowered Society - YES Drop In Center
Emma Richardson
Brigid Kenney
Valeska Populoh
Brian Francoise, Sister Neighborhood Arts Program (SNAP!)
Diane Martindale
Christopher Martindale
Jessica Emerson, The Human Trafficking Prevention Project at the University of Baltimore School of Law
Lorraine Wilson
Booth M. Ripke, Nathans & Biddle LLP
Ashley Hufnagel
mardi hastings, Life After Release; Community Justice
Briana O’Neal
Debora Connolly
Caroline Herritt
Rae Hample
Liz Clayton Scofield
Eva Peskin
Beth Auguste
Adryan Corcione
Liz Ensz
Emma Jaster
Brienna Parsons
Arielle Gordon
Beyond Prisons
Halle
Adam Knapp
Ezra Lin
Amy Carpenter
Avi Zenilman
Toni Perry
Janeth Davidson
Anna Gallini
Ellis Maxwell, Rethink Incarceration
Juan Gutierrez
Ian Guthrie
Kevin Carason
James Collins
Tristan Band
Huey Hewitt, Direct Action Coordinating Committee (DACC)
Tristan Teale
Zach Styles
Gail Thomson
John LeGore
Grace Oppy
Chloe Danyo
Pnina
Alex Chao
cathy n
Kayla
Daniel Espo
Michelle Anderson
Jeremy Abramowitz
Philip Hannan III
Jared Wright
David Joseph
Harry Huckle
Carolina Villegas
Philip Alban
Brendan Raymond
Thomas
Zain Ahmed
George Inotowok
Juan Arbelaez
Cyerra Gage
Anna O’Brien
John Hernandez
Kushan Ratnayake
Astron Lockhart
Paul Hess
Sofia Di Gennaro
Gabrielle Dean
April oviedi
Tom Connolly
Katalina Khoury
Valerie Evans
Fallon Keavney
Rafael Ibay
Derresha
Natnael Bekele
Chris Carpenter
Melissa Bishop Prairie UU Church
Andrew Parsons
aran felice
Juel Johnson
Alex Jimenez
Rebecca Scarborough
Jonathan Feingold
Elizabeth Hazel
Anya Harjung
Magen Toole
Concerned Citizen
   Amber
Timour Kamran
   Catherine
Brady Pelkey
Brandi M Reed
   Mark Sine
Stering
   Clear
joseph ramey
Rodette Jones: United Workers
   Alex Klinman
   Grace Viscito
Devin Luqman, Esq., Managing Partner of Luqman Law
   Juniper Morgan
   Christina Asare
   Jack Hsia
   Sarah Bur, MPH, RN, CIC
   Gary W. Gillespie
Jennifer Zito, representing The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR)
   Kelly
Ashton Landes
   Adrianna O'Brien
Chiara Longoni
   Alyssa Glenn
Candice Smith
   Nisha Foster
Caren Stewart
   Michael Stewart
Kiara Streater
   Ellis Hartridge
   Julian Atta-Poku
Erin McIntosh, SWOP
   Kimberly Haven
Iman Freeman, Baltimore Action Legal Team
   Brittany Smith
Antonia Fasanelli, Homeless Persons Representation Project
Katie Collins-Ihrke Accessible Resources for Independence
   Paul B DeWolfe, Office of the Public Defender
Dominique Conway AFSC-Friend of a Friend
   Laurie Bezold