

April 6, 2020

RE: PLEASE ACT NOW! Letter regarding executive order on prisons from advocacy organizations: AFSC-MI, Citizens for Prison Reform, Detroit Justice Center, Family Advisory Board, Humanity for Prisoners, MI-CURE, Michigan Liberation, Michigan Prisoner Rehabilitation Credit Act, Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc., National Association of Social Workers-Michigan, Nation Outside

Dear Governor Whitmer and Director Washington,

We understand you all are overwhelmed with a historical pandemic and doing your best to negotiate this turbulent time. We also understand you are inundated with recommendations from various stakeholders and powerholders. We represent organizations directly connected to people in prison in Michigan. Many of us have been incarcerated in Michigan's prisons or love people living in Michigan's prisons. We want our voices to be heard and we would like to consult with as you make decisions regarding the treatment of people in the prison system.

There is no doubt in our minds that the best way to manage the Covid-19 challenge in Michigan's prison system is to release as many people as possible as quickly as possible. We believe that can be done without compromising public safety, and in the best interest of public health, but it will require the system to consider different rules.

We have also listed out recommendations for addressing conditions for those people who are left behind.

The following recommendations apply to individuals who score high or average probability on the Parole Guideline Score Sheet and have a home placement available to them:

- Release individuals who are past their ERD. This would include individuals who have not been able to complete recommended programming. Waive all requirements for programming and psychological evaluations.
- Release individuals who are serving time for a technical rule violation.
- Suspend truth in sentencing. Michigan is an outlier in requiring individuals to serve the entire minimum sentence before being considered for parole. Consider releasing individuals who have served half the minimum sentence.
- Restore good time & disciplinary credits and earned credits to individuals who have demonstrated years of good behavior.
- Apply good time & disciplinary credits and earned credits to those serving habitual sentences.
- Release individuals who are infirm, elderly, and medically frail.
- Release people who are receiving care for cancer and other chronic conditions that require frequent off-site care to their loved ones, immediately.

- Create substantive plans for continuing medical care post-incarceration for any person who is currently being treated for a serious medical condition and is released to address COVID 19 concerns.
- Initiate electronic public hearings for all people who are awaiting them and/or who were about to be scheduled for them.
- Treat individuals who are serving long indeterminate sentences as if they were parolable lifers and consider them for parole on the same schedule as lifers.
- Begin a robust effort to process and expedite commutations.
- Increase the size of the parole board to facilitate faster processing.
- Use electronic public hearings to expedite commutations.
- Re-entry monies must be targeted for people released from prison. This includes providing cash assistance relief for people coming home by using both stimulus money and pooling emergency grants from philanthropic institutions. This also includes providing access to providers who can offer recovery assistance for people who use drugs and medication assisted treatment and overdose support

The following are recommendations for those left behind in the prison setting during the pandemic and, also, for after the pandemic:

- Protect people who are ill with COVID-19 and/or exposed.
 - Make sure no one is alone while they are living with COVID-19, or while they are under quarantine for close contact observation.
 - Provide care in the form of frequent access to water, warming foods, pain relievers, and fever reducers.
 - Provide out of cell time for all people with COVID-19 and people under quarantine for close contact and/or full units under quarantine—fresh air is critical.
 - Provide minimal property like sweatshirts, slippers, tablets, books, writing materials, etc.
 - Keep families informed of what is going on with isolated people.
 - Continue to provide masks, soap, and disinfectants that combat the virus.
- Provide free phone calls for people in prison and their communities. The state should cover the costs associated with the GTL contract. The state should immediately end the special equipment fund and bring calls down to 3.4 cents per minute. The state should then cover this GTL rate.
- Stop up charging people for store items. Eliminate the 38% surcharge that goes to the state for store items.
- Provide indigent people in prison with money to purchase store items.
- Provide care for people who are not COVID positive who have chronic health conditions.
- Create separate field medical centers in each prison to care for people who need ongoing care and are not COVID positive.
- Suspend shake downs and pat downs as these contribute to increased cross contamination.
- Suspend the issuing of all misconducts unless violent.

For questions or concerns, please contact Natalie Holbrook nholbrook@afsc.org or 734.330.0555 We look forward to your response and to your prompt action on the aforementioned.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee's Michigan Criminal Justice Program

Citizens for Prison Reform

Detroit Justice Center

Family Advisory Board

Humanity for Prisoners

MI-CURE

Michigan Liberation

Michigan Prisoner Rehabilitation Credit Act

Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc.

National Association of Social Workers-Michigan

Nation Outside



HFP

Humanity
for Prisoners
Action with Compassion



National Association of Social Workers - Michigan Chapter