



121 Mystic Avenue, Suite 9
Medford, Massachusetts 02155
T: (781) 393.6985

April 15, 2020

Governor Ron DeSantis
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor DeSantis:

Having served Florida as police and sheriffs, we wish to commend you for taking effective precautions that are greatly benefiting people across the state, such as ensuring access to testing for Florida's first responders. We urge you to further reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission across our state by acting now to safely and substantially **reduce the population in our correctional facilities**.

Transmission between incarcerated people, officers, and staff will quickly spread outside the facilities to the families of officers and staff, accelerating the pandemic. We have watched governors act on this issue in [Ohio](#) and [Kentucky](#). Tragically, efforts in New York came too late, as [Rikers Island](#) is already facing an unmanageable crisis. As current and former law enforcement, we are writing to urge you to **issue an executive order** to address this risk. A [sample executive order](#) is attached to illustrate our recommendations.

There is strong public support for dramatically reducing jail and prison populations to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Sixty-six percent of likely voters, including 59% of those who identify as "very conservative," said that elected officials should be considering measures to reduce populations in prisons and jails as a response to coronavirus.¹ Criminal justice leaders are already taking action to safely reduce correctional populations.²

It is challenging for our cities and counties to respond effectively to this crisis, since it requires so many different agencies to coordinate. Our justice system needs state-level guidance in order to act swiftly, properly allocate resources, and minimize casualties.

We write to you as the sole actor with the authority to achieve system-level results with clarity, consistency, and vision. We suggest three steps you could take right now to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in correctional facilities and beyond:

¹Fighting the Coronavirus with Decarceration: Policies and Polling, Data for Progress (March 2020) Accessed at <https://www.dataforprogress.org/memos/fighting-coronavirus-with-decarceration>. (March 16, 2020 to March 17, 2020, survey of 2509 likely voters.)

²"Jails Release Prisoners, Fearing Coronavirus Outbreak - WSJ." 22 Mar. 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/jails-release-prisoners-fearing-coronavirus-outbreak-11584885600>. Accessed 23 Mar. 2020.



LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION PARTNERSHIP

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1. **Release medically high-risk people in state custodial facilities.** We urge you to use your clemency powers to begin a process of immediate review and presumptive release for all people identified by the CDC as particularly at-risk – older people and people with underlying health conditions or who are otherwise immune-compromised – whose sentences would end in the next two years and who do not pose a significant public safety risk.
2. **Reduce overall populations in state custodial facilities.** Using your clemency powers, begin a process of immediate review and presumptive release for:
 - a. anyone incarcerated for technical violations of probation or parole, and/or
 - b. anyone whose sentence would end in the next 180 days.
3. **Reduce medically high-risk and overall populations in local custodial facilities.** Direct local stakeholders, including police, prosecutors, and judges, to take concrete steps to reduce the intake of people into local custodial facilities. These steps would include:
 - a. stopping arrests for low-level offenses and issuing citations in lieu of arrest for other offenses,
 - b. suspending the use of cash bail and limiting pretrial detention to cases with a significant risk of flight or charges indicating high risk of violent reoffending, and
 - c. setting conditions of release that allow incarcerated people to care for family at risk for COVID-19.

The time for action is now. This pandemic is here, and it has made its way into our state's carceral facilities. Attached to this letter is a draft [Executive Order that you could sign to immediately to address this crisis head-on.](#)

Sincerely,

Sheriff Jim Manfre (Ret.)
Flagler County, FL

Officer Daniel McDonald
Current Florida Police Officer

Col. David Parrish (Ret.)
Retired Jail Director
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, FL

Special Agent Ray Strack (Ret.)
Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Ft. Lauderdale, FL



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Major Neill Franklin (Ret.)
Maryland State Police
Executive Director, Law Enforcement Action Partnership

Enc. [Executive Order](#): Controlling COVID-19 Transmission and Mortality by Reducing Certain Populations in State and Local Custodial Facilities