



**LAW ENFORCEMENT  
ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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April 2, 2020

Governor Mike DeWine  
Vern Riffe Ctr.  
77 S. High St., 30th Fl.  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

Thank you for leading the country with Ohio's strong COVID-19 tracking response. You have been a brave, early advocate for taking effective precautions that are greatly benefiting Ohioans.

Having served Ohio as police and prosecutors, we wish to commend you, and we wish to request your attention to a vulnerability in our state's COVID-19 strategy. Public health officials are warning that COVID-19 transmission in **correctional facilities** poses a potentially catastrophic risk. Transmission between prisoners, officers, and staff would quickly spread outside the facilities to the families of officers and released prisoners, accelerating the pandemic. We have watched governors act on this issue in [Colorado](#), [California](#), and [New Jersey](#). Tragically, efforts in New York are coming too late, as [Rikers Island](#) is already facing an unmanageable crisis. We are writing to urge you to **take executive action** to address this risk. A [list of concrete recommendations](#) is attached.

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.<sup>1</sup> Criminal justice leaders are already taking action to safely reduce correctional populations.<sup>2</sup>

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 sensible, safe steps you could take right now to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in correctional facilities and beyond:

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<sup>1</sup>Fighting 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.)

<sup>2</sup>"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.



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- 1. Immediately and safely decrease the number of people in Ohio's jails and prisons.**
- 2. Dramatically reduce new incarceration.**

The time for action is now. This pandemic is here, and – if it hasn't already – it will make its way into our state's carceral facilities. Attached to this letter is a [list of action steps that you could take immediately to address this crisis head-on.](#)

Sincerely,

Carlis McDerment  
Former Deputy Sheriff  
Fairfield County Sheriff's Office, OH

Chief Daniel Meloy (Ret.)  
Colerain Township Police Department  
Colerain County, OH

Capt. Howard Rahtz (Ret.)  
Cincinnati Police Department  
Cincinnati, OH

Carter Stewart  
Former US Attorney  
Southern District of Ohio

Chief Tom Synan  
Newtown Police Department  
Newtown, OH

Enc. [Recommendations for Gov DeWine.pdf](#)