



**LAW ENFORCEMENT
ACTION PARTNERSHIP**

ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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April 1, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
Legislative Bldg.
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

As you know, public health officials are warning that COVID-19 transmission in correctional facilities poses a potentially catastrophic risk to prisoners, staff, and communities across our state. We have watched governors act on this issue in [Colorado](#), [California](#), [New York](#), and [New Jersey](#). Having served as police, sheriff, and corrections officials, 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.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 four sensible, safe steps you could take right now to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in correctional facilities and beyond:

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

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.



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- 3. Substantially reduce in-person court appearances for defendants and lawyers.**
- 4. Provide free access to adequate medical care in prisons and jails.**

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,

Jay Fleming
Former Deputy Sheriff
Lincoln County Sheriff's Office

Matthew McCally
Former Corrections Officer
Washington State Department of Corrections

Lt. Col. Arthur Rizer (Ret.)
Former Police Officer
Cheney Police Department

Chief Norm Stamper (Ret.)
Seattle Police Department

Enc. [Recommendations-for-Gov.-Inslee-re-COVID-19.pdf](#)