



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 16, 2020

Contact: Madison Kaigh, Communications Manager
(512) 441-8123 ext. 108 | mkaigh@TexasCJC.org

COVID-19: Texas Advocates, Community Leaders, and Justice System Experts Send List of Urgent Mitigation Directives to Governor's Office

Includes Recommendations for TDCJ, TCJS, County Jails, Law Enforcement, and TJJD

AUSTIN, TX -- Today, a group of advocates, community leaders, and justice system experts sent a list of urgent recommendations regarding COVID-19 and incarcerated populations to Governor Abbott. Urging state leadership to recognize the particularly dire threat that the global pandemic poses to people incarcerated in prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities, the letter lays out recommendations for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ, the state's adult prison system) and the Board of Pardons and Paroles, the Texas Commission on Jail Standards (TCJS, which oversees Texas' county jails), county jails (including sheriffs, courts, and district attorneys), law enforcement, and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD).

"People incarcerated in state prisons or county jails often lack access to some of the most basic disease prevention measures. Certain cleaning supplies and sanitizers are classified as contraband, and running water, soap, and the freedom to social distance are often simply out of reach," the **advocates write**. "We fear the inevitable spread of the virus makes those who are incarcerated particularly vulnerable to the disease, and leaves facilities as a whole susceptible to a devastating outbreak."

The advocates, many of whom have lived experience in the justice system, urge the agencies and individuals listed above to act decisively to mitigate the potentially disastrous effects of COVID-19 on incarcerated Texans and corrections facility staff. They emphasize the vulnerability of the rapidly aging incarcerated population and those with chronic health issues, as well as the likelihood that staff traveling in and out of facilities will be susceptible to catching and spreading the virus.

The letter stresses that Texas still has time to act as a leader by instituting a humane, safety-focused, public health response to COVID-19. Among other recommendations related to corrections facilities are safe reductions in incarcerated populations, preparedness assessments, agency and legislative coordination, ongoing communication with families and incarcerated individuals, temporary elimination of medical co-payments, social distancing with mitigation for risk of unrest, and protections for staff members.

The letter to Governor Abbott and the various directives are available [here](#).