President Trump:

COVID-19 is a public health emergency that requires vigorous preparation and planning from decision makers at every level. Protecting the health of people in detention is a critical step to containing and preventing the spread of the virus. People in detention are particularly vulnerable to an outbreak of COVID-19. They are housed in close quarters and are often in poor health. Enacting decarceral guidelines can help lessen the risk of an outbreak in our jails and prisons. This is also a necessary step to protect the public safety of the broader community, as staff and correction officers go back to their homes each night. ***We are writing to urge you to use your executive power*** to commute sentences in order to drastically reduce the federal prison population.

First, we ask that you commute sentences for **all elderly people.** While the COVID-19 virus infects people of all ages, the World Health Organization (WHO) is clear that [older people](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200311-sitrep-51-covid-19.pdf) are at a higher risk of getting severe COVID-19 disease and dying. In fact, the risk of severe disease gradually increases with age starting from around 40 years. Also, older people who are released from prison [pose little risk to public safety](https://thecrimereport.org/2012/05/29/2012-05-frail-and-elderly-prisoners-do-they-still-belong-beh/). Only 7 percent of those aged 50-64 and 4 percent of those over 65 are returned to prison for new convictions—the [lowest rates](http://www.osborneny.org/resources/resources-on-aging-in-prison/osborne-aging-in-prison-white-paper/) among all incarcerated demographics. Moreover, “arrest rates among older adults decline to a mere [2 percent by age 50](http://www.osborneny.org/resources/resources-on-aging-in-prison/osborne-aging-in-prison-white-paper/) and are close to zero percent by age 65.

Second, we are also asking that you commute sentences for the **medically vulnerable population** including persons from suffering from [cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer.](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200311-sitrep-51-covid-19.pdf) In addition to older people, WHO has identified persons with these underlying medical conditions to be at greater risk for contracting severe COVID-19. While there is little know yet about the effects of COVI-19 on pregnant women, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [explains](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/pregnancy-faq.html) that with viruses from the same family as COVID-19, and other viral respiratory infections, such as influenza, pregnant women have had a higher risk of developing severe illness.

Lastly, we are asking that you commute sentences for **all persons who have one year or less remaining on their sentence**. This measure will limit overcrowding that can lead to [further spread](https://www.newsweek.com/coronavirus-sentencing-project-jails-democrats-1491771) and COVID-19 and free up beds that will be needed to care for the sick who should be housed separate from others.

President Trump, we know how seriously you take your duty to protect our communities and mitigate the impact of this pandemic. We urge you to start commuting sentences immediately as a measure to protect all of us, including the most vulnerable, and start saving lives.

Sincerely,