

The Honorable Governor Ned Lamont
The Office of Governor Ned Lamont
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont:

On November 30, 2020, during a daily press briefing, you announced that you expect the State of Connecticut will begin receiving COVID-19 vaccines by mid-December. During your press briefing, you made clear that your first focus for vaccine rollout will be on frontline healthcare workers, such as those working in hospitals, and that the next phase of the vaccine rollout will prioritize congregate living facilities such as nursing homes. We write with grave concern that your administration is formalizing vaccine distribution plans that ignore the lives of incarcerated people. We ask that your administration prioritize equally all Connecticut residents living within congregate living facilities, which includes incarcerated people living in Connecticut's prisons and jails.



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As you well know, Connecticut is experiencing a second wave of COVID-19 infections in our broader communities and in congregate living facilities including the Department of Correction. Since the beginning of November, in Connecticut overall, there have been 46,088 new cases of COVID-19 infections, representing approximately 1.25% of the population.¹ There have been 461 new infections in nursing homes for the month of November, representing 2.56% of occupied beds.² People incarcerated in the Department of Correction are experiencing a higher population infection percentage than both the general population and nursing homes for the month of November. There have been 257 new infections in the month of November in DOC prisons and jails, representing 2.78% of the prison and jail population.³

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Smart Justice campaign, advocates, and family members with incarcerated loved ones have taken to the streets, the press, and the courts calling on you to do everything in your power to save the lives of incarcerated people. Since March, 1,749 incarcerated people have contracted COVID-19. Eight people unnecessarily lost their lives inside of DOC facilities due to contracting COVID-19. To this day, we continue to hear reports that Department of Correction staff refuse to wear PPE while inside DOC facilities.

¹ Based on data provided by the Connecticut Department of Public Health retrieved from data.ct.gov. For more information regarding the underlying dataset please visit: <https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/q5as-kyim>

² Based on data provided by CMS - Division of Nursing Homes/Quality, Safety, and Oversight Group/Center for Clinical Standards and Quality's CMS COVID-19 Nursing Home dataset retrieved from data.ct.gov. For more information regarding the underlying dataset please visit: <https://data.ct.gov/Health-and-Human-Services/CMS-COVID-19-Nursing-Home-Dataset/w8wc-65i5>

³ Based on data provided by Connecticut Department of Correction's COVID-19 in Correctional Facilities dataset retrieved from data.ct.gov. For more information regarding the underlying dataset please visit: <https://data.ct.gov/Public-Safety/COVID-19-in-Correctional-Facilities/6t8i-du3u>

Connecticut has a moral and legal obligation to protect the lives and health of the people it chooses to incarcerate. Please protect them in your pandemic vaccine rollout plan. Chart a new course, value the lives of incarcerated people, 70% of whom are Black and Latinx, by treating them equally to all residents living within congregate living settings.

Given how overrepresented they are in your prisons, decisions you make on a vaccine rollout have a gargantuan impact on Black and Latino people. You should make that impact a positive one by ensuring incarcerated people receive equal priority among all residents of congregate living facilities.

We request a joint virtual meeting to discuss this matter with you, your staff, COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Group, the Connecticut Department of Correction, and the co-chairs of the Judiciary Committee who have oversight over the Department of Correction. Please respond to this letter confirming your intention to meet with us by December 9, 2020. I can be reached by email at cfox@acluct.org or by phone at (860)-523-9146.

Respectfully,

Claudine Fox
Campaign Manager
ACLU of Connecticut

The American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut is a nonpartisan, non-profit membership organization that defends, promotes and preserves individual rights and liberties under the U.S. and Connecticut constitutions in state and federal court, the General Assembly and the state's 169 towns and cities.



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