Dear Governor Brown,

Re: Protecting Oregonians in our prisons, jails, courts and the criminal legal system in general from the spread of coronavirus.

I am concerned about the particular threat that the coronavirus poses to people who live or work in Oregon’s state and county correctional facilities, people who use or work in our courts, and anyone intersecting with our criminal legal system.

I know that for people in custody in particular it is often difficult to follow best practices of social distancing, frequent handwashing, and sanitizing of spaces. Incarcerated people may be particularly vulnerable to the spread of the coronavirus.

Fortunately, as governor of the state of Oregon, you have significant power and influence over how we respond to this crisis. I urge you to take further action to protect everyone who lives and works in prisons, jails, courts, and the criminal legal system. There are two key areas for you to focus your efforts:

* Reducing the number of people entering prisons and jails
* Releasing people who are already there into alternative options such as community supervision with the support they need to thrive.

To achieve these goals, I ask that you:

* Create a task force to work with agencies, public officials and others to protect the health of the community as it relates to people in the legal system and prisons and jails.
* Compel and oversee expedited processes to safely release people from prisons and jails.
* Direct local and county officials to significantly reduce jail populations.
* Commit to providing the resources necessary to reentry and social service providers and medical providers to ensure people leaving incarceration will be successful and healthy.
* Affirm that agencies under your supervision will be open and transparent with people in custody, their families, and our communities about their actions to combat and address COVID-19.
* Make phone calls free for people in prisons and jails since they are unable to see their loved ones in person.
* Issue guidance to the Department of Corrections, the Oregon Youth Authority, and jails that they should refrain from cooperating with ICE so that people are not released into ICE custody at this time or held on behalf of ICE.

These recommended steps and others have been identified by a coalition of Oregon organizations, including the ACLU of Oregon, Disability Rights Oregon, the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, the Oregon Justice Resource Center, Partnership for Safety and Justice, and Sponsors, Inc.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME