Dear Director Peters,

Re: Protecting everyone who lives and works at Oregon Department of Corrections facilities from the coronavirus.

I am concerned about the particular threat that the coronavirus poses to people who live or work at our state’s correctional facilities. I know that in the environment of a prison it is often difficult for people to follow best practices of social distancing, frequent handwashing, and sanitizing of spaces. Incarcerated people may be particularly vulnerable to the spread of this disease.

I am writing to urge you to take further action to protect everyone who lives and works in the facilities that are under your supervision. In particular, I encourage you to:

* Develop and share publicly your plan to address the likely prospect of an outbreak of coronavirus in one or more Oregon prisons.
* Take additional precautions to guard against the spread of the disease to vulnerable populations such as the elderly, people with preexisting conditions, people with compromised immune systems, pregnant people, and people whose housing placements limit their access to care and your staff’s ability to observe them.
* Ensure everyone has access to supplies to keep themselves and their space clean, and that laundry is done frequently.
* Create a streamlined process for requesting testing and ensure that testing is carried out promptly.
* Send people who test positive for coronavirus to hospital for treatment and quarantine, rather than subject them to prolonged isolation in prison.
* Implement medical quarantine where appropriate and plan ways to reduce the stress and hardship on people who are quarantined.
* Routinely screen staff before and after shifts by taking body temperatures and asking about their current health.
* Protect the right to counsel and access to the courts by ensuring people can have regular communication with their legal team and access to court proceedings.
* Make phone and video calls to family free while visiting is prohibited.
* Prepare people leaving custody for reentry into a statewide emergency through education and connections to resources. Everyone should be released with a hygiene kit.
* Suspend coordination with ICE for people who have ICE detainers.
* Work with county partners to help make sure people who have a jail term to serve after their prison sentence can serve their jail sentence in the community instead.
* Request that medical providers develop a list of people to prioritize for early release on medical grounds in case it becomes necessary to reduce prison populations.
* Support transparency by being open with the public and family members about what is happening, comply with public information requests from the media, and collect data on the outbreak in your facilities.

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