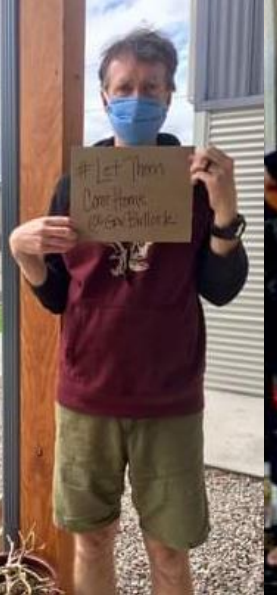






#LETTHEMCOMEHOME



#LetThemComeHome

WHO ARE WE?

We are a group of Indigenous and Latinx organizers raising awareness around criminal justice issues. Each member of our group is a justice-involved community member.

#LetThemComeHome is an action campaign that began in March in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

Since March, we have organized community members across the state to contact Governor Bullock and Montana DOC Director Michael, urging them to develop and implement plans to protect the people in our prisons and jails from COVID19.

We have also sent emails and made calls to county jail staff, county attorneys, county commissioners, city council members, and sheriff's offices demanding action at the local level.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Across the nation, Covid-19 infection rates are up to 5.5 times higher among prisoners than the general population. The death rate is also higher. The total # of inmates who have died in the US is around 930, with over 100k infected.

As of August 31, there are over 100 reported positive cases in at least five county jails, as well as cases in pre-release centers, multiple DOC facilities, and state mental health facilities. We don't know how many have been infected, as accurate data is not being released in a timely manner.

SUPPORT & TAKE ACTION

CONTACT OFFICIALS

Call and email the following people to demand action:

Governor Bullock
406-444-3111
(toll free 855-318-1330)
governor@mt.gov
citizensadvocate@mt.gov

Dept. of Corrections Director Michael
406-444-4913
Reginald.Michael@mt.gov

SHARE INFORMATION

- Follow these groups and share info:
 - Montana Women Vote
 - ACLU of Montana
 - Disability Rights Montana
 - Welcome Back
- Talk to your friends and family.
- Call your local city council and county commissioners.
- Register to vote by October 26.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Get in contact to learn more about volunteering, organizing in your community, or donating to support organizers and events.

letthemcomehome@gmail.com

EVERYONE DESERVES SAFETY FROM COVID-19

WE DEMAND ACTION NOW!

1 END NEEDLESS ARRESTS AND DETENTION

Local health departments, counties, and cities need to coordinate to end unnecessary arrests and detentions. Too many county jails and detention facilities are overcrowded. We demand that counties end any new incarceration and stop issuing warrants for revocations from supervision, failure to appear, or for unpaid fines or fees.



2 REDUCE INCARCERATED POPULATIONS

Social distancing is impossible in incarceration facilities. We demand that local and statewide officials immediately take steps to reduce the number of people in prisons, jails, and other detention facilities. This includes immediately releasing people who are immunocompromised, those over 60 years of age, those eligible for parole within the next year, and those being held pretrial who are not "deemed a threat" to the community.



3 PROBATION & PAROLE REQS WAIVED

The Board of Pardon and Parole needs to temporarily waive requirements (e.g. treatment, pre-release, and others). The few people who have been granted parole are being denied release because of these requirements.



4 PROVIDE PPE

Since social distancing is nearly impossible, people who are incarcerated need to be allowed to wear masks and be housed in places with proper ventilation. Facility staff need to ensure that everyone has access to running water for hand washing, clean masks, and personal hygiene products.



5 INFORMATION & CARE TO INMATES

Facility staff need to provide regular and accurate information to incarcerated people about Covid-19 safety precautions and early signs of infection. If someone gets sick, they should be provided immediate care, not placed in an isolation cell or left in contact with others.



6 PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY

Facility staff and statewide electeds need to provide immediate and regular accurate data on infections in jails, prisons, and other detention facilities. As well as provide regular information regarding what preventative measures are occurring in facilities.

7 HALT TRANSFERS

All transfers between facilities needs to be halted immediately. This includes transfers of incarcerated people and facility staff.



PROTECT INCARCERATED PEOPLE FROM COVID-19

"It's Like Sardines:" Advocates Call For Health Protections For Inmates

By EDITOR • SEP 3, 2020



Ashley Moon and Clemente Arciga rally at the governor's residence on Sept. 2, 2020 to demand Gov. Steve Bullock institute additional coronavirus-related protections for correctional inmates.

KEVIN TREVILLYAN / YELLOWSTONE PUBLIC RADIO

Originally published on September 3, 2020 5:50 pm

Advocates for Montana inmates say their fears of COVID-19 outbreaks within correctional facilities are coming true. They're demanding state officials take bigger steps to prevent the novel coronavirus from spreading further.

Signs in hand, organizers stood outside the governor's residence in Helena on Wednesday afternoon denouncing what they call inaction on behalf of the incarcerated.

In April, Gov. Steve Bullock asked the Board of Pardons and Parole to consider releasing vulnerable inmates who don't pose a safety risk early to reduce the chance of COVID-19 outbreaks in correctional facilities, but advocates said it wasn't enough.

Now, LetThemComeHome organizer and ACLU of Montana policy associate Zuri Moreno says Montana has hit a breaking point. State officials halted the transfer of inmates from three county jails last week after more than 90 inmates and staff tested positive for COVID-19.

"We've been talking about it in a what-if scenario, like what if COVID gets into a county jail, and we're no longer in that scenario. It's here, and we need to discuss it and take action," Moreno said.

#LetThemComeHome advocates rally at the Montana State Capitol on Sept. 2, 2020 to urge state officials to release vulnerable inmates in light of recent COVID-19 outbreaks at county jails.



Kevin Trevelyan
/ Yellowstone Public Radio

In late August, the Department of Corrections also reported a positive case at Montana Women's Prison and roughly two dozen positive cases at other third-party contracted centers.

Advocates want the state to provide inmates more personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies. Organizers want the Department of Corrections to immediately reduce inmate populations by releasing those who are immunocompromised, over 60 years old or eligible for parole within the next year.

The Montana Supreme Court declined a similar petition in April.

Organizers also set up signs outside the Montana State Capitol on Wednesday and live streamed their requests on social media.

Though organizer Laurie Little Dog acknowledged the need to preserve public safety, she says counties should alleviate jail overcrowding by ending pre-trial confinement for nonviolent charges like petty theft and marijuana possession.

"I don't think that's justifying you being thrown into a jail situation that's COVID-positive," Little Dog said.

Clemente Arciga works with former inmates transitioning back into society. He says prisoners are struggling with cramped facilities and coronavirus-related restrictions on movement. Inmates have reported that it's impossible to socially distance in spaces designed for fewer people.

"It's like sardines, just thrown in there together. Nowhere to move, nowhere to go. People in prison are still humans, you know," Arciga said.

Asked for comment, Bullock's office referred to his April directive. A Department of Corrections spokesperson referred to a Tuesday announcement that the department will spend \$1 million in coronavirus relief funds on equipment to mitigate health risks in state-owned and contracted facilities.

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Dome Lights (excerpt)

Great Falls Tribune

Phil Drake

Published 1:14 p.m. MT September 5, 2020 Updated

From the dome to your home. Ramblings, mutterings, keen observations and things you ought to know out of Helena from the mind of Phil Drake.

... **#LET THEM COME HOME:** Some protesters in a group known as "#LetThemComeHome" stood on the south lawn of the state Capitol a few days ago.

They want the governor to reduce the prison populations, and as organizers said, to implement an Emergency Management plan for how the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) would mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in correctional facilities statewide.





"With the influx of outbreaks at detention facilities throughout the state we chose to take what used to be a protest-in-place to the Capitol Hill and specifically to the governor's residence not just to bring awareness, but demand action," Laurie Little Dog, an organizer said.

She said they would like officials to immediately release people who are immuno-compromised, those over 60, eligible for parole within the next year and those being held pretrial who are not "deemed a threat" to the community.

She told me in an email they then marched from Capitol to the governor's residence carrying signs and chanting. And returned with hand drums, singing and "having a one-sided dialogue" with the governor about the need for immediate intervention to protect incarcerated people from COVID-19.

A few days ago I got an email from the state saying Department of Corrections has bought or are buying about \$1 million in equipment to help mitigate the risk of COVID-19 at its state-owned and contracted facilities.

This includes whole-room disinfectant machines; standard disinfectant machines; telemedicine units; infrared, no-contact thermometers; handwash stations; remote blood pressure stations; transport vehicles for moving offenders among facilities (capable of isolating driver from patients); small transport vehicles for moving offenders from units to infirmary (capable of isolating driver from patients); and more, the DOC said in a news release.

"These purchases will help us to further reduce the possibility of the virus entering our facilities," said Connie Winner, administrator of the DOC's Clinical Services Division.

I was moving forward with this story, and even got a comment from the American Civil Liberties Union of Montana in which a spokeswoman noted "the ACLU has taken a number of steps to urge the state to take action, including letters to the (governor) and also a petition to the Supreme Court.

We do not think enough has been done to protect those in Montana's prisons and jails from COVID-19," she said.

Like I said, I was working on a story but then the wheels started coming off the cart: The number of COVID-19 cases kept rising at the Cascade County Detention Center, which keeps some inmates for the state and then the Sanction, Treatment, Assessment, Revocation and Transition Center in Anaconda, which contracts with the state, had 45 staff and offenders test positive.

This is the kind of story that those who know me know I describe a "fluid," meaning it's in movement. And I need a little more time, given with all the other stuff going on.

So stay tuned ...

Dome Lights appears Sunday, unless the villagers catch me. Email me at pdrake@greatfallstribune.com or call 406-231-9021. I'm based in Helena. Mail me at P.O.Box 1601, Helena, MT 59624.

Movement aims to help Montana inmates during pandemic

by Shannon MacNeil

Friday, May 22nd 2020



People are using "#LetThemComeHome" to bring awareness to what inmates are going through during the pandemic. (Photo: Clemente Arciga)

MISSOULA, Mont. — Signs reading “#LetThemComeHome” are being posted around Missoula in hopes of helping those inside Montana’s prisons.

“We’re not necessarily asking to let everybody out,” explained Clemente Arciga, with the organization Welcome Back.

According to the [Montana Department of Corrections website](#), they have confirmed two coronavirus cases among inmates and three cases among staff.

“The family members in prison are reaching out saying they don’t have proper gloves or cleaning supply to clean their bathrooms or their living areas,” said Arciga.

Gov. Steve Bullock [issued a directive](#) on how Montana prisons should handle the pandemic.

Welcome Back and others around the state say the DOC isn't following through on this part of the directive: "The Board of Pardons and Parole will also consider early release for older inmates, inmates who have medical conditions that make them high risk, pregnant inmates, and inmates nearing their release date -- but only where the Board determines that release does not pose a public safety risk and that inmates can adequately receive medical care and meet supervision requirements in the community."

Arciga listened in on a meeting with the Montana DOC and told us, "They looked at 190 cases, and out of those 190 cases they only let out three."

#LetThemComeHome is a group effort by organizations around the state. People are posting photos with masks on, using the hashtag and tagging Bullock to try to get his attention.

"Let them come home -- it's just that, it is the voice for those who are incarcerated that can't speak for themselves," said Arciga.

We reached out to the Montana Department of Corrections and the governor's office for comment but haven't heard back.

