

Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee (IWOC)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Supporting ACLU, WISDOM, and other groups in their calls for effecting “compassionate release,” sending home all people expecting trial, and stopping further arrests and imprisonment in light of COVID-19 outbreak, IWOC-Milwaukee is demanding urgent additional measures for improving safety and communication in Wisconsin prisons.

MILWAUKEE, WIS. – March 19, 2020 – Following alarming updates from Wisconsin prisons pointing to insufficiency of current measures against the spread of COVID-19, IWOC-Milwaukee demands emergency measures.

As ACLU, WISDOM, and dozens of other groups in Wisconsin and nationwide are demanding from every state to release all prisoners age 60 and higher, bring home all people in prison expecting trial, and stop further arrests and imprisonment in light of COVID-19 outbreak, IWOC-Milwaukee is receiving testimonies that point to the need of urgent measures to ensure prisoner safety and communication.

“NLCI [New Lisbon Correctional Institution] has my unit locked down because of 18 cases of influenza A.... The CDC recommends hand sanitizers, the DOC denies it.... I feel we need to ask before the storm hits so the families of the 1400 can prove deliberate indifference,” J.G. writes.

“The Secretary Kevin A. Carr has issued an alert and memorandum explaining the upcoming procedures to be followed to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. So far, inmates’ personal visits have been cancelled indefinitely and other things of ours, including but not limited to movement, graduations and events, recreation, group activities and other things may be cancelled at a later date. While they specifically warn us about what not to do or to do, washing our hands, avoid touching our eyes, nose and mouth, avoid hand to hand contact such as handshakes, it does NOT tell us that any/all staff will be screened such as having their temperatures taken when entering the institution. Let’s be honest, the only way inmates will get it is by staff neglect/ignorance,” A.P. writes from Green Bay Correctional.

H.B. in Stanley prison states that staff is already not in good health: “Workers show up every day, coughing, hacking, blowing their noses.”

“Inmate transfers from Institution to Institution still happening all over the state!! All staff is still coming and going, carrying Covid-19 to a high concentration of people. What makes staff any less likely to carry and spread the virus that anybody else? Furthermore a high percentage of staff is above 45 years old. What sense does this make? Protocol for DOC in case of pandemic, quarantine! DOC does not have room at 140% operating capacity. Most institutions are old

with poor to no ventilation and little chance of containment. Do the non violent offenders deserve such exposure?" M.H. writes from Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution.

As recent [fatalities in senior homes](#) demonstrate, it only takes one misstep to turn an isolated, overpopulated institution into a death camp. IWOC is hence demanding from Gov. Tony Evers and Wisconsin DOC to adopt emergency measures aimed at improving prisoner safety and communication.

1. **Until visits to prisoners are allowed again, all phone and email communication should be free.** Currently, one phone company has allowed 15 minutes of free time a week. This is insufficient and, in fact, demeaning to people in Wisconsin prisons.
2. **Special protocols must be adopted for the interaction between prisoners and guards, identical to ones now established in senior homes.** The 6 feet separation rule should be respected.
3. **All prison workers should be tested for COVID19 once a week, special cleaning services must be arranged.**
4. **Transfers of prisoners between correctional facilities should be prohibited.**
5. **Prison population density must be reduced.**

Help IWOC to end prison slavery in Wisconsin