



Governor Jared Polis  
Via [governorpolis@state.co.us](mailto:governorpolis@state.co.us)

Governor Polis:

We write to you as Colorado Attorneys Against Police Violence (“CAAPV”). We founded as a group of attorneys committed to fight against state-sanctioned violence, particularly against our most vulnerable and marginalized.

We are troubled by your recent statements that “incarcerated people” deserve access to a COVID-19 vaccine after “free people.” We represent many people who are incarcerated in jails and prisons across our state. We have taken phone calls from clients describing horrific conditions and calls from clients who have contracted COVID-19 inside Colorado jails and prisons. Some of us have gotten the dreaded call to let us know that someone we represent has died from COVID-19 while imprisoned, forced to suffer and take their last breath alone.

We are troubled that your apparent political agenda and messaging is causing you to ignore the advice of public health experts, who acknowledge that Colorado jails and prisons consistently have some of the highest infection rates in the state. We are disgusted by your willingness to use past acts to dehumanize and devalue the worth of a human being inside a cage. We fiercely believe that no person deserves to be robbed of their humanity, regardless of the reason they are in jail or prison. Your fearmongering comments also mislead those who do not know what you know: that the vast majority of those people housed in Colorado prisons are serving time on low-level, non-violent offenses and that the vast majority of those in Colorado jails are pending trial and, under our American system of justice, are presumed innocent. We are concerned by your lack of recognition of your own privilege as you cruelly disregard the worth of those living on the inside, those who are disproportionately poor, people of color, and people living with mental illness – Coloradans you represent and have a duty to protect.

We were saddened to hear of your recent COVID-19 diagnosis. Your diagnosis and the diagnoses of other elected officials stands as proof that this virus knows no walls, and that even those who vigilantly practice social distancing, mask wearing, regular hand washing, and other preventative measures are at risk of infection. We are empathetic to the strain this illness must have placed on you, your family, and your loved ones, and wish you a speedy recovery.

We are writing to ask that you use your intimate understanding of the reach and severity of this illness to govern with compassion and empathy towards those you are constitutionally mandated to protect and to recognize your own privilege. While you navigate our state through unprecedented times, you do so with access to quality health care, financial means, and food and housing security. You do so with the privilege to take appropriate precautions.

We are writing to ask you to consider how you would feel if a loved one was diagnosed with COVID-19 without access to health care, or at constant risk of exposure and completely and physically unable to act in a way to prevent infection.

We are writing to you to ask you to recognize “incarcerated people” as just that: people. Human beings with people who love them and want nothing more than for them to survive long enough to come home, to wrap them up in a hug, to laugh around their tables, to raise their children, and to be allowed to exist with dignity and respect.

With your own pen, you repealed the death penalty in this state and cleared Colorado’s death row. With that act, you ensured that no one in Colorado would be punished with death for their crimes. We are asking you to make good on that promise, to give Coloradans access to a vaccine based on priority rather status, and to not condemn those inside jail and prison walls to die.

Respectfully,

Colorado Attorneys Against Police Violence