

Dear Spokane Regional Law & Justice Administrator Maggie Yates,

All of us want to ensure our families, communities, and working people are thriving. No matter our color, how little is in our wallet, or whether we live on a city block or a country road, we all want our loved ones to be safe in times of crisis. Many of us know all too well the pain of seeing a loved one struggle with addiction, mental illness, and/or incarceration, and sadly, some members of our community have lost loved ones to COVID-19.

With the Smart Justice Spokane coalition, I urge you to re-open Spokane County with justice, safety, and liberty for all. We are alarmed that Spokane County has wasted millions of dollars and thousands of community members' hours in the name of reforming our criminal justice system, yet has failed to make good on commitments to decarcerate and advance racial equity. The pandemic response of public health releases created the smallest jail population in decades, proving that decarceration is not only possible but essential for a healthy community--but too many of our Black, brown, and Indigenous family members were left behind bars.

Locking away our families and neighbors for their struggles is a choice we don't need to keep making, and must not keep making, in Spokane County.

As our County and courts re-open, we call on you to use COVID-19 funds and other resources to fund proven solutions to implement ongoing COVID-19 strategy, keep jail numbers low, end racial disparities, and increase access to treatment and services.

The long term COVID-19 threat must mean we do not increase jail beds with tents or a new jail.

We call on you to ensure justice, safety, and liberty prevail for the most vulnerable members of our society:

1. Ensure racial equity in continued public health releases for the safety of our loved ones and community.
2. As courts re-open, work transparently with community members to keep our loved ones out of jail:
 - a. Use proven solutions including jail diversion and increased culturally-appropriate treatment, recovery, and re-entry supports.
 - b. Change arrest policies that criminalize poverty, homelessness, and addiction.
 - c. End cash bail, fully fund pretrial services, expedite pretrial reform, and make sure public defenders have the resources needed. Stop forcing our family members to serve a sentence while still presumed innocent.
3. Prevent coronavirus exposure via the criminal justice system with measures including:
 - a. Personal protective equipment including masks in accordance with the direction of the Spokane County Health Officer.
 - b. Regular, consistent testing of all jail staff, everyone booked or incarcerated, and all criminal justice system staff.
 - c. Coordination with the Health District for science-based best practices in all phases.
4. Apply race equity analysis tools and outcome measurements in all phases of this pandemic crisis response, in all areas of the criminal justice system and related governmental agencies. Publicly release analysis, plans, and actions to create racial equity, along with frequent and regular data

on the numbers and racial demographics of who is in our jail and who has access to alternative programs.

5. Sustain active, intentional, and transparent engagement with credible impacted population community leaders.
6. Interrupt the implicit social conditioning to which we are all subject and from which none of us are immune, with tools such as Implicit Bias Bench Cards.

This crisis is an opportunity to invest COVID-19 and other federal/state funding in historically underserved communities with culturally-appropriate treatment, support services, education, housing, jobs, and neighborhood resources to create a vibrant and healthy Spokane County where all families can thrive.

When we give our loved ones the chance to recover from addiction, mental illness, and trauma, we make this a community where people come together from different places and different races to make things better for future generations.

Sincerely,