

## Katal Center Health, Equity, and Justice

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **As Lawmakers Gather for Another Special Session, Family Members of Incarcerated People & Community Group Protest to Demand the Legislature and Governor Address COVID-19 in Jails and Prisons**

**Families and Community Members Demand Action as 1,558 Incarcerated Individuals Have Tested Positive for COVID-19 in CT Jails and Prisons**

**With Virus Continuing to Spread in Correctional Facilities Across the Country, Governor Lamont and the Legislature Must Immediately Release Incarcerated People to Save Lives**

*For images and videos of the action, see our Twitter feed [here](#).*

**Hartford, CT** – Today, dozens of family members of incarcerated individuals and community groups convened outside of the Connecticut State Capitol for a rally and speak out to demand Governor Lamont and the legislature immediately address the issue of COVID-19 in correctional facilities.

The special session continues today, but glaringly missing from the agenda is any plan or proposal to address COVID-19 in state prisons and jails. As the pandemic continues to spread across the country, correctional facilities make up some of the [worst outbreak sites of COVID-19](#) in the country. Connecticut is among the top [10 worst states in the country](#) in terms of COVID-19 rates per capita of incarcerated individuals. With 1,558 positive COVID-19 cases and 7 COVID-19 deaths for incarcerated individuals, every day that the Governor and legislature do not act means incarcerated individuals remain in life threatening danger.

Governor Lamont and the legislature have refused to take the necessary preventive measures to release incarcerated individuals and build a comprehensive plan for COVID-19 within the Connecticut Department of Corrections (DOC). These decisions directly go against [public health experts](#) in the state who have recommended for months the immediate release of incarcerated individuals and have highlighted the urgent threat of COVID-19 in jails and prison across the state.

Since the onset of the pandemic, Katal along with community groups, public health experts, and family members of those incarcerated, have demanded, through [letters](#), [demands statements](#), and [actions](#) that the General Assembly develop a comprehensive plan that saves lives and addresses COVID-19 in prisons and jails. Governor Lamont and the legislature must act now to save the lives of incarcerated residents, who are disproportionately Black and Latinx. Jails and prisons are notorious incubators of contagions, due to close quarters and unsanitary conditions, meaning that Governor Lamont and the legislature's inaction in the midst of this public health crisis will result in needless deaths.

Throughout the protest, constituents spoke about Governor Lamont's outrageous reluctance to protect the individuals in Connecticut prisons and jails by developing a comprehensive and transparent COVID-19 plan for the DOC. Participants at the rally held signs with words of currently incarcerated people and their loved ones, calling out the discrepancies in the stories they are hearing in contrast to the stories told by the DOC. Directly impacted family members and constituents demanded that the legislature take swift and aggressive action to decarcerate Connecticut jails and prisons in order to continue to flatten the curve of COVID-19 within the Connecticut Department of Corrections and save lives. Without action, there will be more needless deaths.

#### **Statements from Katal members and family members of people incarcerated in Connecticut:**

**Isaiah Terry, Member of the Katal Center, said:** "With over 1,500 incarcerated people who have tested positive, we are far behind containing COVID-19 behind bars. To date, over 10% of the entire state prison and jail population have tested positive for COVID in CT-- 10% of any other population outside of those who are incarcerated tested positive for the virus, action would have been taken swiftly. There needs to be movement by the legislature to ensure that we free them now."

**P.G., incarcerated man at MacDougall-Walker, said:** "The pervasive problems in the CT DOC are pervasive, historic, and continue to this day. Our facility is consistently short on protective gloves, and our cleaning supplies are often diluted. This is unacceptable. Dramatic change is long overdue, and it is clear that improvement in the CT DOC will not come from within."

**Andrew McGuire, Member of the Katal Center, said:** "We are here fighting for those who are behind bars in our state prisons and jails. I used to be one of those people, so I know exactly what goes on there. What they are living through is inhumane. This is why we are here to demand that something be done for those who have no choice but to live through this while the Governor refuses to act."

**Barbara Fair, Organizer with Stop Solitary CT, said:** "It's time that Connecticut's leadership care about people who are incarcerated because their lives matter too. We have thousands who

have been infected with COVID-19. I asked our Governor months ago if he was indifferent to the lives of those behind bars, and he couldn't even answer me. Our leadership needs to recognize that all lives, those behind bars and those not behind bars, matter."

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