

April 15, 2020

Secretary Brian Moran  
Virginia Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security  
1111 E Broad St # 5035  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Secretary Moran:

We the undersigned Commonwealth Attorneys are writing to voice our concerns for the incarcerated and detained young people in Virginia. As we all work together to lessen the impact of this virus on every population in our state, we stand with [RISE for Youth](#), [Physicians for Criminal Justice Reform](#), [Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights](#), [National Partnership for Juvenile Services](#) and [Fair and Just Prosecution](#) to support the safe and humane treatment of incarcerated youth during this crisis. We echo RISE for Youth and the many other organizations asking that you take immediate action to ensure that the Department of Juvenile Justice, local detention centers and each facility holding incarcerated young people in the Commonwealth take every reasonable precaution to keep all youth and the staff that care for them safe and healthy while protecting their human rights. We support and acknowledge the efforts that all have already taken to protect these vulnerable populations, but these efforts have already failed to keep the COVID-19 Virus out of our states last remaining juvenile correctional center. In order to strengthen these efforts to safeguard all of Virginia's youth, we ask that administrations and agencies holding youth follow the recommendations of RISE for Youth which include:

1. Immediately halt as many new admissions to juvenile detention and correctional facilities as possible and initiate the appropriate release of youth from juvenile detention and correctional facilities by:
  - a. Examining all pre- and post-adjudication release processes and mechanisms and employing these processes as quickly and as liberally as possible.
  - b. Release to appropriate medical care facilities or other safe living environments youth who have COVID-19 symptoms, chronic illnesses, such as asthma, diabetes, or who are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 due to other illnesses.
  - c. Eliminate the use of detention or incarceration for youth unless a determination is made that a youth presents a substantial safety risk to others or to the community.
2. While youth are awaiting release:
  - a. Provide written and verbal communications to youth regarding Covid-19, provide access to COVID-19 testing and healthcare.
  - b. Ensure continued access to education.
  - c. Ensure confidential access to legal counsel through in person visits or teleconferencing.
  - d. Ensure liberal access to family and support networks through open phone access.
3. Create appropriate transitional plans for youth released from custody to:
  - a. Confirm youth have a safe and adequate place to live.
  - b. Ensure young people's basic needs are met.

- c. Ensure immediate & adequate medical care is provided.
  - d. Ensure immediate access to Medicaid.
4. For youth on probation:
- a. Eliminate incarceration as an option for technical violations of probation.
  - b. Allow youth to travel and access medical care, stay isolated when necessary, and take care of themselves and their loved ones without fear of probation violation.
  - c. Eliminate requirements for in-person meetings with their probation officers.
  - d. Place a moratorium on all requirements to attend and pay for court and Probation ordered programs, community service and labor.
5. Create an immediate moratorium on the assessment and collection of all fines and fees in the juvenile legal system for the duration of this public health and economic crisis to address the economic instability exacerbated by COVID-19.

We appreciate your commitment to the Commonwealth's safety, and we offer our support to safeguard the health and wellbeing of incarcerated youth during this crisis.

Sincerely,

**Parisa Dehghani-Tafti**, Commonwealth's Attorney, Arlington County, Virginia

**Shannon Taylor**, Commonwealth's Attorney, Henrico County, Virginia

**Bryan Porter**, Commonwealth's Attorney, Alexandria, Virginia

**Stephanie Morales**, Commonwealth's Attorney, Portsmouth, Virginia

**Buta Biberaj**, Commonwealth's Attorney, Loudon County, Virginia

**James Hingeley**, Commonwealth's Attorney, Albermarle County, Virginia

**Steve Discano**, Commonwealth's Attorney, Fairfax County, Virginia

**Joe Platania**, Commonwealth's Attorney, City of Charlottesville, Virginia