

Hello.

I am a social work student and I have been working with a prisoner correspondence program that has received an abundance of letters from people incarcerated in Oregon Prisons. I would like to highlight a letter we received in May from a person who had covid while incarcerated at Columbia River Correctional Institute:

“Social distancing is impossible in CRCI. The bunks in my unit are less than 3 feet apart from each other. Most individuals can reach out and touch each others’ bunks just by arm’s length...

In March and April, I was sick for weeks with a bad cough, body aches, difficulty breathing, and very bad chest pain. I was called down to medical on March 17th, but since I did not have a fever, they told me that I would be put on call out to see a doctor in two weeks.”

They went down to medical and asked for a mask so that they would not cough on others. The response was:

“They did not give me a mask. A nurse told me that if I kept complaining, she could send me back to Oregon State Penitentiary.”

On the next day, “ I was called down to the doctor’s office and given a mask so that I would not cough on people. Other medical staff told the doctor I should be in isolation if I need a mask, but he said there was no need. They were still arguing when I left medical. When I went back upstairs to my unit, security took the mask away from me.”

In March “...I filed a grievance about the COVID situation and not being able to social distance, but it was denied on the basis that it was not a misapplication of DOC rules. The denial said that because it was not DOC rule that people had to stay 6 feet apart, no rule was broken, and it was not grievable.”

“Any grievance related to COVID, social distancing, or CDC guidelines was denied.”

“The administration told us that there will (be) no housing options other than **segregation** for AICs who have symptoms and need to be isolated. People are afraid that if they get put into segregation for disciplinary reasons, because segregation also houses people with COVID-19 symptoms, they will be exposed to the virus.”

As we can see from this person’s testimony, keeping folks incarcerated is causing death and fear. The virus came into the prisons because of neglect, continues to spread because of neglect, and people continue to die because of the same neglect. **Prison is** neglect. The vaccine alone is not going to account for this neglect. No one should have to fear for their lives like this. Free them all!

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