April 9, 2020

Governor John Bel Edwards  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
Via E-mail to: Matthew.Block@la.gov  
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Dear Governor Edwards,

As faith leaders across Louisiana, we come together to ask that you exercise moral leadership and use the emergency powers at your disposal to save the lives of those incarcerated. Many of us minister in prisons, in jails and to those who have reentered our faith communities after returning; we know the dangers they face. The large population of elderly and sick incarcerated individuals was a moral stain on our state prior to COVID-19. However, we have run out of time to act.

We ask that you immediately activate the release of the elderly and the vulnerable held in DOC and ICE facilities. The spread of COVID-19 is a global catastrophe on a level that no elected official or policymaker in office has ever experienced before. History will ask how we worked in this moment to prevent suffering and loss of life for all of our community members, especially those we incarcerated.

With the highest rate of incarceration rate in the world, Louisiana has more people serving life without parole per capita than any other state. Many members of our congregations are already affected daily by the absence of loved ones from their lives. While struggling through this difficult time, they have the added hardship of knowing their detained family and friends cannot protect themselves from the rapid spread of COVID-19 while behind bars. We fear those in detention are being sentenced to death despite your power to release them. We fear for those who work as correctional officers, medical staff, chaplains, mental health providers, and all personnel. We are concerned for their families and communities as well. This virus does not know the boundaries of confinement.

We, the undersigned, call upon you to administer emergency powers and protect our most vulnerable before it is too late.
In faith,

Amina Rae Horton, Ordained Minister, Sufi Ruhaniat International, Temple of Universal Worship
Chad Westley
Chaplain C.W. Robinson, OPSO and Orleans Justice Center
Cheryl Mouton, Community Activist, Chairperson Coalition for Justice "Breaking the Chains"
Darrian Johnson
Deacon Joseph Clavijo - Episcopal Church
Diana Collins
Dionell Perkins, Cook and former prison Deacon at Elaine Hunt Correctional Center
Domique Jones-Johnson, Founder Daughters Beyond Incarceration
Dr. Willie Gable, Jr. President Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Greater New Orleans
Earl Hagans
Eugene Vessel
Fr. Fred Kammer, SJ, Director, Jesuit Social Research Institute, Loyola University
Garreth Payton, Professional Boxer
Iyafalola H. Omobola, Priest, New Afrikan Spiritual Mindset Awareness Institute
Jane Snyder, Director of Outreach Ministry, Cathedral of St John Berchmans, Shreveport, La
Jairriel Bazile
Joe Morris Doss, Bishop of the Episcopal Church and Attorney at Law
Katie Bauman, Senior Rabbi of Touro Synagogue
Kecia Brownn, LPN
Kiana Calloway
Keith Griffin
Laquenta Hill
Latonia Bickham
marie rinaudo
Michael Cowan, Professor, Loyola University
Min. Leo Jackson Second Zion Prison Ministry
Mollie Diggs
Mrs. Corinne F. Barnwell
Mylan Gibson
Pastor David Brazil, Abolition Apostles Jail & Prison Ministry
Pastor Debra. B. Morton, Greater St Stephen F.G.B.C
Pastor Sarah Pritchard, Abolition Apostles Jail & Prison Ministry
Patricia Ann Bordelon Stallings
Rev. Alexis Anderson, Member, East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Reform Coalition
Rev. Andrew Greenhaw, St. Paul's UCC New Orleans
Rev. Benjamin Groth, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, New Orleans
Rev. Becky D. Conner
Rev. Darcy Roake
Rev. Dr. Joe Connelly, J.D., D.min.
Rev. Dr. Marc Boswell
Rev. Michaela O'Connor Bono, Zen Buddhist Priest, Mid City Zen
Rev. Elizabeth Mangham Lott
Rev. Paul Beedle, First Unitarian Universalist Church of New Orleans
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Sister Alison McCravy, SFCC, Esq.
Sister Bernie Barrett
Sister Shawn Conrad, OSB
Sr. Cecilia Castillo, STJ
The Reverend Gary Brooks, Presbyterian Church, USA, retired
The Reverend Melanie Morel-Ensminger
The Rev. Watson Lamb
Tiffany Galmore
Varice Cooper
Wesley E. Bridges, CEO of Clergy For Prison Reform

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