



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ADOCRR Hides Rampant and Escalating COVID-19 Spread in Arizona Prisons and Jails**

**Phoenix, Arizona**--COVID is rising exponentially inside of Arizona's prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers. Community organization Puente Human Rights Movement (Puente) has received direct reports from individuals inside of Lewis State Prison, Perryville Prison, and La Paz County Jail, and their loved ones, disclosing the following human rights violations that have ensued as a result of COVID's spread: no running water, lack of basic and essential provisions including blankets and cutlery, and denial of rights to religious services and video visitations, among other human rights abuses.

According to one report from Lewis State Prison, at least 800 incarcerated people are displaying COVID-19 symptoms, with no sign of the spread slowing. Reports on the quarantine conditions of people who have tested positive inside Lewis State Prison emphasize the necessity of immediate intervention: units used for quarantine are being cooled to intolerably cold temperatures; individuals are not provided with sheets or blankets; and people in quarantine are not provided with cutlery and are being forced to eat with their hands. Meanwhile, the situation at Perryville State Prison worsens as reports from people inside the prison state that there is currently no running water available, making basic sanitation and hygiene impossible.

Puente has also received direct accounts from La Paz County Jail that describe the entire population as being divided and quarantined based on out-of-control positivity rates inside the jail. According to an internal memo sent to all inmates, all positive testing individuals will be merged into a singular quarantine unit this week--including both those who are presenting COVID symptoms and those who are asymptomatic. Those individuals will be completely stripped of their rights to exercise, education, religious services, and video visitation. The imminent living situation of people who have tested positive remains uncertain; the jail has not informed the public as to how they will ensure safe and humane conditions of confinement during the pandemic, nor have they provided any information regarding additional public health measures to be put in place to stop the spread, such as through the provision of Personal Protective Equipment or steps towards decrowding.

Puente's worst fears regarding COVID-19 in prisons, jails, and detention centers are coming true; it is clear that the virus is completely out of control, and that it is our community members



inside who are at risk. Understanding the public health risks inherent in overcrowded and under-ventilated jails and prisons, Puente has been urgently advocating since the start of the pandemic for the release of all incarcerated people beginning with the most vulnerable to COVID-19, and for any incarcerated person who tests positive for the virus to be moved to a medical facility to receive adequate care. Meanwhile, ADOCRR and Director Shinn have done little to mitigate these risks, and the people who are incarcerated are the ones paying for Shinn's and ADOCRR's negligence.

Given these recent devastating reports, Puente Human Rights Movement Co-Director Jovana Renteria believes that "ADOCRR is deceiving the public and lying about COVID positivity rates among people incarcerated in Arizona prisons, jails, and detention centers." Referencing the fear and illness experienced by community members inside prisons and jails, Renteria emphasizes, "death from COVID-19 was *not* their sentence. ADOCRR and Director Shinn must be held accountable!"

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[More information about Puente's #AZFreeThemAll Campaign](#)