



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Puente demands a federal Investigation into ADOCRR as over 20% of people incarcerated in ADOCRR facilities test positive for COVID-19

Phoenix, Arizona--As Arizona remains as one of the world's worst COVID-19 hotspots after hitting number one globally for COVID infection rates in January 2021, Phoenix non-profit organization Puente Human Rights Movement (Puente) is asking the nation to turn its attention to the often ignored COVID-19 spread inside the Arizona's jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers. Several of the nation's worst COVID-19 hotspots during the pandemic have been Arizona carceral facilities. During the first eight months of the pandemic, Puente's COVID-19 hotline received over 400 calls from incarcerated people and their families who shared information about the horrific conditions of confinement. Many callers shared that they had no access to running water, soap, toilet paper, cleaning supplies, nor Personal Protective Equipment.

As of January 25, 2021, 30 people have died in Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry care and 9,108 people have been confirmed positive with COVID-19, while state and county responses to the pandemic continue to ignore their needs. Out of the tested population in Arizona's prisons, over 20% have tested positive. Puente has been informed that many people who are trapped in Arizona's cages are fearful of seeking medical attention out of fear of retaliation from officers, or out of fear of being sent into solitary confinement for extended periods without treatment; the number of COVID-positive people incarcerated in the state may be much higher due to lack of reporting.

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 spread in Arizona's jails, prisons, and detention centers, and the lack of adequate response from the state, Puente is launching a new campaign demanding that the state comply with CDC guidelines and international human rights standards for people in detention, or else release people from the state's care. Puente's "Comply & Release" campaign lists 13 demands including but not limited to: releasing all prisoners who have preexisting conditions that put them at greater risk of death from COVID-19; ending the use of solitary confinement as a method to quarantine COVID-positive people; firing ADOCRR Director David Shinn & ICE Field Director Jessie Williams for their ongoing negligence and failure to act; transparency in budget spending for state and private prisons; and launching a federal investigation on conditions of confinement and oversight in ADOCRR and ICE detention centers. For a full list of demands, visit www.puenteaz.org/complyandrelease.

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