



**State Headquarters:**  
207 E. Buffalo Street, Suite 325  
Milwaukee, WI 53202-5774  
414-272-4032 / Fax 414-272-0182  
[www.ACLU-WI.org](http://www.ACLU-WI.org)

December 3, 2020

Wisconsin's State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee (SDMAC)  
Vaccine Distribution Subcommittee  
Attn: Martha McCamy  
Via email to: [dhssdmac@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:dhssdmac@dhs.wisconsin.gov)

Dear Martha McCamy,

The American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working to protect civil liberties and civil rights, and we are writing to ask that the Vaccine Distribution Subcommittee include incarcerated people in the 1b priority level for vaccine distribution, along with corrections officers.

Around the country, COVID-19 has spread at unparalleled rates inside jails, prisons and detention centers. In Wisconsin's prisons, 8,668 people have tested positive for COVID-19 as of the date of this letter, and 14 people have died from the disease.

We continue to be concerned that vulnerable people in state prisons are not being protected, as these congregate facilities remain ill-suited for social distancing. Moreover, we have heard from so many incarcerated people who are in fear for their lives, and their families on the outside who are concerned that they may never see their loved ones again. Here are some first-person accounts that have come to the ACLU of Wisconsin from these impacted individuals:

*My brother has a compromised immune system. He's in federal prison. He will die if infected with COVID19.*

*My father is almost 67 years old and is in poor health. He has lung damage from being in a coma for 2 weeks after a stroke. He is currently incarcerated at Winnebago Correctional Center as a minimum security inmate awaiting release.*

*It is not fair to keep these older people in our prisons and not give them a fighting chance at not contacting this virus. My loved one is 52 years old and has diabetes, heart problems and asthma. He has no sanitizer, no way to isolate himself from others having to stand in line with hundreds of prisoners every day for food and health care and with the correctional officers coming and going in and out of these facilities I fear he doesn't have a fighting chance at anything to keep himself safe.*

*My husband is currently incarcerated in a state prison; he is high risk because he has untreated HCV. Please help.*

There are practical reasons for assigning them to the 1b group - logistically, it makes sense to provide the vaccine to everyone at a prison at one time, rather than make separate trips for the guards and the people who are incarcerated. Also, public health officials have been very concerned with the community spread around prisons, particularly because of the lack of hospital capacity especially in smaller cities and rural areas where prisons often are located. Taking care of everyone in a facility will make this spread less likely.

We hope you think about these vulnerable people who are not able to take other precautions, and include incarcerated people in your 1b priority level for vaccine distribution, along with corrections officers. People in Wisconsin's prisons should be offered the same opportunity to be vaccinated (or decline to be vaccinated) as their guards.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Christopher Ott  
Executive Director  
ACLU of Wisconsin