



MEMPHIS INTERFAITH COALITION FOR ACTION AND HOPE

Immigration & Intercultural Equity Task Force

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Current Calls for Action - May 4, 2020

Shelby County Division of Corrections (SCDC): Transparency/ Public Access to Information & Safeguarding of Those Incarcerated and Working in SCDC

- While the Shelby County Sheriff's Office is regularly updating the public about the detention facilities under their charge (201 Poplar, Jail East, and the Juvenile Detention Center) through press releases and social media, there is no publicly available information coming out of Shelby County Division of Corrections (SCDC) regarding how the division is safeguarding those in their charge. No COVID testing has been reported from the SCDC incarcerated population.
- The Shelby County Division of Corrections is under the supervision of Director Anthony Alexander. Director Alexander was appointed by and reports to Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris. Despite multiple attempts to communicate with Director Alexander since our initial communication on April 7, MICAH has received no response to our inquiries or calls for action from Director Alexander or SCDC.
- According to conversations MICAH has had with Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris's Office, fourteen personnel (employees and contracted labor) at SCDC have tested positive for COVID-19 (with five having recovered and returned to work) and zero incarcerated individuals. Only those in the incarcerated population who are displaying symptoms are being given masks. This information is not publicly available anywhere we can find.

What MICAH is calling for:

- MICAH calls on **Mayor Harris** to require regular, publicly shared information from Shelby County Division of Corrections (SCDC) regarding how the SCDC is proactively protecting this population who is very vulnerable to the virus due to close proximity of living/sleeping/dining in the facility.
- MICAH calls on **Dr. Haushalter and/or Mayor Harris** to request mass testing for the SCDC personnel and population within ten (10) days and to immediately release the results of all testing to the public.
- MICAH calls on **Mayor Harris** to require that masks be provided to all who live and work in the facility regardless of symptoms, since many positive cases have been asymptomatic.

Continuing Decarceration/Deconcentration of Shelby County's Incarcerated Population

- While there has been a reduction of the incarcerated populations in Shelby County since the pandemic began in March, there are still many incarcerated who could be released thereby reducing the number of people exposed to COVID-19 in our county's jails and prisons.
- While we continue to hear that those who remain in Shelby County detention centers are the “worst of the worst” we do not have that data. How many are misdemeanor-only charges? How many of those with felony charges are violent vs. non-violent charges/convictions?

What MICAH is calling for:

- In addition to continuing the review and release of individuals who have low bonds, are elderly, pregnant, or immunocompromised, MICAH calls on **District Attorney General Weirich** and the **Office of Probation and Parole** to recommend and advocate for the release incarcerated individuals who:
 - have 90 days or less remaining in their sentence. The benefits of keeping someone for the 1-90 days they have left on their sentence does not outweigh the negative impact of their being at heightened risk for contracting COVID-19 and spreading it to others.
 - are incarcerated on nonviolent technical violations. These individuals were previously deemed able to be back out in society and are being brought back into custody when they could be provided alternative supervision through the Office of Probation and Parole.
- MICAH calls on **DA Weirich** to release the data regarding the incarcerated populations in Shelby County as well as the data regarding her recommendations for early release as requested in an email sent to her office on May 1, 2020.