

# COVID-19: Statewide Demands



## Tennessee Freedom Caucus

**46 Tennessee counties.**

**40+ organizations.**

**& we're just getting started.**



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## *Tennessee Freedom Caucus*

*The Tennessee Freedom Caucus is a coalition of over 40 justice-oriented and grassroots groups located across the state. Established in February 2019, the coalition envisions new possibilities for public safety that are rooted in fully resourced communities; holistic, collective care that includes healing; and meeting the needs of every community member.*

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# Introduction

The Tennessee Freedom Caucus is a coalition of over 40 justice-oriented and grassroots groups located across the state. Established in February 2019, the coalition envisions new possibilities for public safety that are rooted in fully resourced communities; holistic, collective care that includes healing; and meeting the needs of every community member. We are working in urban and rural areas to organize a critical mass of Tennesseans to build a political platform and engage Tennesseans and elected officials based on this agenda. Some of the values that inform our work include accountability; reparations for our people; and investing in infrastructure, social services, and resources that make our people whole while divesting from policing, jails, and surveillance.

As COVID-19 has spread globally and within the United States, we have been in communication with each other about the needs of our cities, towns, and communities. As a statewide coalition, we are positioned to push a collective set of value-rooted demands surrounding the ongoing issues Tennesseans are facing that are now exacerbated by COVID-19. These demands are reflective of what we need now in order to survive this pandemic and ultimately achieve long term, collective liberation.

Through a survey and conversations with community members, the priority areas that have been identified include: local jail and detention center release, prison release, housing support, workers' rights, economic justice, healthcare, education, and voting rights. This document contains demands in these areas.

Millions of people are at risk of becoming infected and dying from COVID-19, which makes these demands urgent for Tennessee. On Monday, March 23, [a group of infectious disease experts informed health officials in Memphis](#) that if action is not taken now to implement the necessary precautions, more than 400,000 people could become infected and more than 8,000 people could die in the city. That projection is only for Memphis, one city within the state.

We call on our local and state officials who have the power to meet these demands to ensure that all of our people are safe and have access to the resources they need to survive this crisis and live fuller lives post this state of emergency.

Attention:

*Bill Lee, Governor*

*Herbert Slatery III, Tennessee Attorney General*

*Jeffrey S. Bivins, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Tennessee*

*Randy McNally, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker, Senate*

*Cameron Sexton, Speaker, House of Representatives*

*Tony Parker, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Correction*

*Lisa Piercey, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Health*

*Jeff McCord, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce*

*Penny Schwinn, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Education*

*Jennifer Nichols, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Children's Services*

*Tre Hargett, Secretary of State*

*Mark Goins, Coordinator of Elections, Tennessee State Election Commission*

*Gabe Roberts, Director, TennCare*

*Jim Purviance, Executive Director, Board of Parole*

*Jeff Long, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security*

*David B. Rausch, Director, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation*

*Dereck Stewart, Colonel, Tennessee Highway Patrol*

*Ralph M. Perrey, Executive Director, Tennessee Housing Development Agency*

*Tennessee Mayors, Sheriffs, Police, and District Attorneys*

**We ask that these local and state officials review all of the demands within this document and act *now* to protect the lives of millions of Tennesseans who are vulnerable and would experience significant harm if immediate action is not taken.**

# Our Demands

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## On Local Jails, Detention Centers, and Tennessee Department of Corrections

### Local Jail and Detention Center Release

**On the matter of local jail and detention center decarceration in the state of Tennessee, we demand the following policy reforms to protect the health and safety of incarcerated people now:**

- 1. Immediate release of people who are being held in local jails.** The rate of jail incarceration in Tennessee is nearly double the national average. The majority of jails in Tennessee are severely overcrowded, which is not only unconstitutional and dangerous but also a matter of life and death, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. Most people in Tennessee jails are not convicted of a crime and are incarcerated pretrial, including many who are incarcerated simply because they cannot afford to pay their bail. We must prioritize community safety over keeping costly jail beds filled by preventing an outbreak inside jails and detention centers, which is only inevitable without immediately releasing people from incarceration.
  - a. Provide housing, medical care, substance use services and treatment, mental health care, transportation, and child care assistance as needed to all released individuals** to ensure safe transition into community.
- 2. Immediate release of all people being held in local juvenile detention centers** by Juvenile Courts. Whenever possible, release youth in juvenile detention to the care of their family and/or guardians, without further intervention by child welfare agencies.
- 3. End pretrial detention and release community members newly accused of a crime on their own recognizance without setting bail and without restrictions** including but not limited to electronic monitoring, which can severely limit people's access to healthcare for themselves and their families.
- 4. If no other release options are possible, provide medical furlough and immediate release options for incarcerated people who are particularly vulnerable to illness,**

including but not limited to elderly and pregnant people, and/or those who have serious chronic medical conditions, mental illness, and disabilities.

5. **If medical furlough or release is not an option, commit to humane and dignified treatment of people who remain held in pretrial detention and local jails.**
  - a. **Provide people who remain incarcerated with access to free preventative measures**, including free daily temperature checks, free medical testing, free treatment, free toilet paper, free phone calls, and free video visitation. We realize that temperature checks will identify people with symptoms, yet we are aware that asymptomatic transmission is still possible and could be one of the driving factors of transmission.
  - b. **Provide people who are forced to remain in jail with access to items necessary to survive this crisis free of charge** including soap, sanitizing products, healthy food, and any other items.
  - c. **End solitary confinement and mandatory lock down to quarantine or isolate individuals.**
6. **Provide adequate testing in local jails and detention centers** to prevent the spread of the virus.
  - a. **Maintain a mandatory COVID-19 screening for staff** daily, including temperature checks.
  - b. **Institute daily COVID-19 screening options for incarcerated people who request**, including temperature checks.
  - c. **Notify family or the designated emergency contact on the same day**, in the event that an incarcerated person tests positive for the virus or exhibits symptoms of the virus.
7. **Immediately cease ICE enforcement, suspend all contracts with ICE, and allow for individuals who have ICE holds to be immediately released regardless of county**, including but not limited to those who are seeking asylum. All Sheriff's Departments and Police Departments within the state must cease cooperation with ICE.
8. **Cease detainment of individuals with outstanding warrants or parole/probation infractions, civil violations, and monitoring of individuals on probation or parole.**
  - a. **Halt all in-person probation and parole meetings and the collection of fees.**
  - b. **Release people who are in jail for technical violations.**
  - c. **Cease charging people for probation and technical violations.**
9. **Cease all in person court proceedings and pretrial hearings** and instead utilize teleconference when needed. Court proceedings, whether in person or via teleconference should only take place if the standards of both protecting public health and upholding attorney/client privilege can be upheld. To the extent that not all courts

have the capacity to conduct proceedings while maintaining these standards, court proceedings should not be held and courts should release individuals from jail.

- 10. Vacate all outstanding bench warrants.** End work release and child support holds.
  - 11. Mandate police departments halt arrests and issue citations rather than booking** in order to ensure that jail populations are kept to a minimum and to prevent exposure.  
**Refrain from making arrests for failure to comply with “shelter in place” order.**
  - 12. Dismiss any pending charges and probation violations** for anyone arrested and newly arrested for drug offenses, traffic violations, trespassing, and vandalism.
  - 13. Conduct review and expedited release of people being held in halfway houses** with continued access to any necessary mental and physical health supports necessary to their reentry into society.
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## Prison Release

**On the matter of prison decarceration in the state of Tennessee, we demand the following policy reforms to protect the health and safety of people in prisons, including those sentenced locally for felonies, now:**

- 1. Release as many people from incarceration in Tennessee prisons as possible.** Given the lack of testing available, ongoing staff shortages, and insufficient medical personnel to deal with a pandemic inside the prison system, the medical duty of care required by Tennessee code cannot be met during this crisis. All people inside Tennessee prisons and sentenced locally must be considered for release due to the inherently dangerous nature of jails and prisons particularly during this pandemic, but we especially demand:
  - a. **Immediate release of all those especially vulnerable to illness** including but not limited to:
    - i. Medically fragile people
    - ii. Adults over 50
    - iii. Pregnant people
    - iv. All individuals incarcerated for self defense and/or failure to protect in an abusive situation, criminalized survivors who have been unjustly charged. Criminalized survivors of abuse have greater risks to the virus due to the impacts of domestic violence and trauma on weakening the immune system.

- b. **Release of all people, including those serving life sentences, who have served at least 20 continuous years** and who therefore have the lowest rate of recidivism.
  - c. **Release of individuals who have less than three years to serve.** The questionable value of deterrence pales in comparison to the exponential risk of keeping them incarcerated.
2. **Eliminate medical co-pays for incarcerated people and staff.** Many people in prison refuse to go to medical because they have no financial resources and cannot incur debt due to a co-pay. With their low rate of pay, prison staff and particularly correctional officers also often avoid seeking medical care, presenting a dangerous health risk to those incarcerated in the facilities in which they work. It is essential that all incarcerated people and staff have full access without barriers to health care at this time. Accordingly, copays for both incarcerated people and staff must be suspended.
  3. **End solitary confinement and mandatory lock down.** Medical experts have warned that continued utilization of solitary confinement puts the prison population at even higher risk for an outbreak because it is more difficult to observe and identify symptoms early on.
  4. **Eliminate parole revocation for technical violations.** Technical violations are qualitatively different from a new or repeat offense. The increased risk of reintroducing people for technical violations back into a vulnerable prison population is irrational and should be immediately discontinued.
  5. **Eliminate in person meetings with parole officers.** Sheltering in place for public safety requires teleconference whenever possible. That safety precaution should be no different for those on parole and their parole officers. To continue such meetings, which require travel back and forth and new potential exposures of the virus, increases public risk without justification.
  6. **Institute a presumption of parole. Individuals shall not be denied parole based on “seriousness of offense.”** Individuals shall not be denied parole based on “seriousness of offense” when such individuals are otherwise deemed suitable for release. Individuals who come up for parole reviews should do so with a presumption of release unless assessed to be a real threat and danger.
  7. **Release individuals who are incarcerated solely for a drug charge.** Individuals convicted solely for drug crime should be released.
  8. **Release individuals who have met their release eligibility date.** Individuals who have met the threshold of their required sentence should be released unless deemed to be an active threat to public safety.

- 9. Test prison staff weekly, log temperatures daily, and give paid leave for all prison staff who have been exposed.** Maintain a mandatory screening for staff daily, including temperature checks. We must take necessary measures to ensure the pandemic does not take lives of incarcerated individuals, who are especially vulnerable populations.
- 10. Give incarcerated people the option to log temperatures daily, to test at least weekly, and for release or hospitalization for all who have been exposed free of charge.** Early detection is essential to prevent the spread of the virus, especially as infectious diseases run rampant in correctional institutions.
  - a. **Institute daily COVID-19 screening options for incarcerated people who request,** including temperature checks.
  - b. **Notify family or the designated emergency contact on the same day,** in the event that an incarcerated person tests positive for the virus or exhibits symptoms of the virus.
- 11. Suspend all court costs and parole fees.** Court costs and parole fees criminalize poverty, put people at unnecessary risk of re-arrest, and accrue more debt that will exacerbate economic barriers for families and communities that are already particularly burdened due to the economic impact of the crisis.
- 12. Suspend all transfers of incarcerated individuals into Department of Correction custody who are currently incarcerated in a local jail. Suspend all intra-prison transfers.** Transporting people during this crisis between jails and prisons puts individuals at unnecessary risk of contracting and spreading the virus.
- 13. Suspend fees for video visitation, and guarantee in person visitations will be restored when this pandemic crisis is over and individuals are no longer required to shelter in place.** Visitation and human contact is essential for families and children with incarcerated loved ones. Parents are more likely to succeed at treatment for substance use disorders and less likely to return to prison; by staying connected with their parents, children can experience healthy development, better mental health, and fewer behavioral issues.
- 14. Eliminate fees for telephone calls.** Fees for telephone calls create major communication barriers between families and their incarcerated loved ones, which is only exacerbated by the suspension of in-person visitation due to the crisis.
- 15. Provide housing stipend, transportation, and child care assistance as needed to all released and recently released individuals.** Many incarcerated people do not have safe housing options upon release. The houseless population is among the most vulnerable and must receive adequate release planning and resources so they can safely return to the community. With most services closed, there must be measures taken to provide adequate transition and re-entry.

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## On Housing

**On the matter of housing in the state of Tennessee, we demand the following policy reforms to protect individuals who are houseless and experiencing housing insecurity now:**

- 1. Immediately enact rent and mortgage suspension.** A rent and mortgage suspension is the only safe and reasonable solution to the immediate challenge of housing insecurity during this pandemic, as an overwhelming number of people are now unemployed or underemployed.
  - a. No company or individual operating within the state of Tennessee may levy rental or mortgage fees, late fees, or other charges for occupation of a private living space against individuals who reside in this state.
  - b. No new charges, including charges for Section 8 and for all other need-based housing programs, may accrue during the period that Tennessee is in a state of emergency.
  - c. Ensure that all waived rental fees may be claimed as a write-off toward the tax liability of any business or person that loses profit during the suspension.
  
- 2. Suspend all evictions.** Displacement of people is a cruel and unnecessary public health risk during this crisis. Shelter is crucial to the success of all current plans to flatten the curve and keep our hospitals from being dramatically overwhelmed.
  
- 3. Provide uninterrupted access to public utilities and suspend utility payments.** We must guarantee that basic utility needs are met so that vulnerable communities are able to stay safe, informed, and protect their families.
  - a. Suspend utility shut-offs, including, gas, water, electric, Internet, and cable access.
  - b. Immediately reconnect utility services to ensure access for those whose services have been shut off due to lack of payment.
  - c. Cancel any debt to utility service providers until the state of emergency has been lifted.
  - d. End privatization of Internet access, restore municipal telecommunications companies, and provide free signal boosters to communities who don't have or have limited access to the Internet.

4. **Provide housing and care for the unhoused.** Those who lack shelter during this time experience a dramatically increased risk. Destroying the community infrastructure of houseless camps and forcing houseless individuals and families to new locations across the city and county will contribute to increased spread of COVID-19, particularly if people do not know they have contracted the virus. We demand that officials:
    - a. Provide supportive housing for houseless individuals and families.
    - b. Immediately cease sweeps of houseless camps.
    - c. Utilize state and local emergency powers to commandeer local hotels/motels and other unused land and properties for use as emergency shelters for those who are unhoused and those being released from detention.
    - d. Provide houseless people with access to the Internet and to sanitizing products.
  
  5. **Expand the Uniform Residential Landlord-Tenant Act to include all counties in Tennessee.** Those most vulnerable to issues of discrimination and mistreatment while inhabiting rental properties must be protected from harm.
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## On Workers' Rights

**On the matter of workers' rights in the state of Tennessee, we demand the following policy reforms in order to protect workers and their jobs now:**

1. **Provide at least 4 weeks of paid time off** for anyone whose hours have been reduced and are missing work due to social distancing measures.
2. **Provide at least 14 paid sick days** for all direct employees and workers outsourced through temp agencies.
3. **Ensure that health insurance is provided** to all employees and "subcontractors"
  - a. **Provide free screenings and care** when needed.
4. **Ban retaliation against workers** who miss work due to sickness, emergencies, or choosing to socially distance themselves.
5. **Hire back laid off workers** after the pandemic.
6. **Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and training** to reduce virus spread and injuries. Ensure sanitary conditions on the job and take all steps possible to reduce risk.
7. **Protect agricultural farmworkers** in order to ensure their health and to maintain food sovereignty and security of Tennessee food supply. During this crisis, the agriculture

industry faces supply chain slowdowns and shortages, which must be combated by meeting the needs of workers within the industry.

- a. **Commit to the health of agricultural workers** and provide personal protective equipment (PPE) and training for workers.
  - b. **Provide paid sick leave** for agriculture workers.
  - c. **Provide visas and safe immigration and travel means** for agriculture workers.
8. **Provide support for local small businesses to convert to worker ownership models** and support workers in the creation of new co-operative businesses.
  9. **Provide all accommodations available for independent contract workers**, including Uber and Lyft drivers.
  10. **Provide essential workers with free access to public transportation** and expand public transportation systems in counties where there is no public transportation.
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## On Economic Justice

**On the matter of economic justice in the state of Tennessee, we demand the following policy reforms to financially support people, especially those who are low income and cash poor now:**

1. **Establish a statewide Guaranteed Basic (monthly) Income of \$2,000 per adult, \$500 per child, and an additional \$100-200 for those with special needs to all people living in Tennessee, including people who are incarcerated.** Ensure that the basic income:
  - a. Adjusts to inflation of the US dollar
  - b. Is not taxed as income and is not included in household resources in order to avoid penalties of recipient
  - c. Is a direct cash transfer
  - d. Establishes Guaranteed Basic Income Office to preside over the allocation of income
  - e. Does not strip federal and state funding for currently established social safety nets
  - f. Includes all Tennessee residents and community members regardless of felony conviction, incarceration status, former incarceration, citizenship status, or housing status
2. **Reallocate the \$730 million in unused block grants from TANF for a monthly Guaranteed Basic Income** for families impacted by COVID-19 and those additionally impacted by the recent tornado.

3. **Establish a Guaranteed Basic Income Agency designated to administer distribution and gather data on the efficacy of the Guaranteed Income program.**
    - a. Agency should include researchers from Tennessee universities (MTSU, Fisk, etc), as well as administrators to formulate mechanism for distributing direct cash transfers.
    - b. Ensure the funds used to establish and distribute the Guaranteed Basic Income do NOT infringe on currently established safety net programs.
  
  4. **Build and protect the co-operative economy and workers at small businesses:**
    - a. Bail out cooperative businesses with grants and provide funding for non-extractive community-based funds for cooperative businesses.
    - b. Provide funding to support conversions of struggling businesses to cooperatively owned business models to avoid closure.
    - c. Fund cooperative training centers and community funders of co-operative business.
    - d. Combat the loss of cultural and neighborhood institutions by offering comprehensive grants for small businesses.
  
  5. **Provide elderly individuals who are caregivers with financial resources and childcare options.** Many grandparents or other older guardians are raising school-aged children for a variety of reasons and they need extra support as people most vulnerable to COVID-19 and as primary caregivers.
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## On Healthcare

**On the matter of healthcare in the state of Tennessee, we demand the following policy reforms in order to expand healthcare access and save lives now:**

1. **Provide free healthcare through the expansion of Medicaid.** Healthcare is a human right. We urge Governor Lee to immediately expand Medicaid to hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans. This will ensure that community members have access to the healthcare necessary to survive this pandemic.
  
2. **Eliminate policies that deny health coverage** for pre-existing conditions and certain procedures, including abortion.
  
3. **Re-open rural hospitals that have been closed** because of the legislature's refusal to expand Medicaid in Tennessee. It is important that decision makers prepare several hospitals for COVID-19 patients. In efforts to expand access to health care, decision makers should not militarize the provision of healthcare as a response to COVID-19.

4. **Provide free preventative measures and sanitation products, free medical testing, and free treatment to all people**, particularly people who are houseless, low income, Black, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and elderly, regardless of their level of insurance coverage or immigration status and without fear of criminalization or intimidation.
5. **Maintain full treatment and support for individuals experiencing substance use disorder and/or mental health challenges.** This measure should include people who have been receiving treatment before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as people who may need treatment or support in the future.
6. **Maintain the full capacity of the healthcare system**, from large hospitals to small clinics, supplied with sufficient resources to care for all patients, including patients that have medical needs other than treatment for COVID-19.
7. **Maintain the continued provision of care for pregnant people and people seeking abortions, including comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care.** Expand telehealth benefits to reproductive health and prioritize all reproductive services. Eliminate the ban on telemedicine for abortion pills and make them available through mail.
8. **Provide treatment at no cost to the patient, now and beyond the life of the COVID-19 pandemic, for people who are now experiencing or will experience secondary physical or mental illness**, including post-traumatic stress disorder, as a result of COVID-19.
9. **Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers and for individuals who have been designated as “essential workers,”** including incarcerated people doing sanitation work, transportation workers, emergency responders, airline operators, TSA employees, facilities management workers, and other workers with broad exposure to the public.
  - a. Provide gloves, N-95 face masks, protective eyewear, face shields, and disposable gowns, and other necessary protective equipment provided in the appropriate amounts for the protection of patients and healthcare workers. The same should be available to essential employees based on their level of engagement with potentially infected people.
  - b. Provide adequate training on the use of PPE for healthcare workers and essential employees.
10. **Provide hand-washing stations for individuals in houseless camps.** The houseless population is forgotten in times of crisis. They need to be supported and have their needs met to be healthy and safe during this time.
11. **Supply food and necessary items including vegetables, fruits, cooking supplies, and sanitizing materials in communities impacted by food apartheid.** Many

community members live in neighborhoods without access to grocery stores that provide healthy food options, cooking supplies and sanitizing materials. Without access to these necessary resources, communities are more vulnerable and put at greater risk.

- 12. Increase monthly payments to people who receive social security and disability checks and immediately increase SNAP and WIC benefits by 100%** to ensure communities have access to the resources necessary to survive.
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## On Voting Rights

**On the matter of voting rights in the state of Tennessee, we demand the following policy reforms in order to uphold and protect the right to vote now:**

- 1. Implement a “no excuse” vote-by-mail/absentee ballot** that allows everyone to request a mail-in ballot without regard to age, need, disability, language status, or other reasons.
- 2. Direct counties to request mail-in ballots to voters and provide prepaid postages** for their envelopes.
- 3. Make all mail-in ballots uniform across all counties with respect to envelope and ballot design in order to insure visibility and readability.**
- 4. Implement a vote-by-mail system that allows voters to track their ballot from the time it is sent to the time it is scanned and finally accepted.** This should include a unique barcode on each ballot and envelope to allow voters to track the status of their ballot. The tracking of ballots should be available online through the respective county registrar or clerk’s office or election commission, while also considering other tracking options such as text, email, and phone. It is important that the signature matching process is not overly restrictive and is published to the general public two weeks before ballots are mailed.
- 5. The mail-in ballot system should leave ample opportunity for voters to correct or “cure” their ballots if they are rejected due to inconsistencies in the signature verification process.** Following the recommendations of election protection experts, the other verification systems entail social security numbers, bank statements and utility bills, driver’s license numbers, and affidavits or sworn statements.
- 6. Provide a ballot-processing environment that allows for the safe/secure/healthy observation of workers by non-partisan groups or election monitors.** This will help bolster public confidence and allow officials to perform a ballot comparison audit.

7. **Extend the deadline to request absentee ballots to three (3) days before election.** The current deadline to request absentee ballots is seven (7) days before Election Day. This deadline should be extended to three (3) days before the election to give voters more time to request an absentee ballot.
  8. **Ensure that eligible voters who are in pretrial detention are able to get their absentee ballots delivered to them and returned.** Encourage local election commissions to develop and publish for review a plan for distributing absentee ballots in local jails to voters in pretrial detention.
  9. **Provide early voting and in-person drop off options, as well as mail-return options for those voting by absentee ballot.** Ballot drop-off boxes should be locked or sealed with a tamper-evident seal. They should be visible with large signage, in ADA accessible areas, and in or near public buildings and other highly frequented areas.
  10. **In elections held during a presidential or gubernatorial emergency or disaster declaration, ballot envelopes from home should be permitted.** Voters should be permitted to access a secure website, login, and print their ballots and ballot envelopes from home.
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## On Education and Children

**On the matter of education in the state of Tennessee, we demand the following policy reforms in order to protect young people, students, and educators, including young people who are in state custody, now:**

1. **Provide supplies and technology for students to strengthen access to distance learning:**
  - a. **Provide technology and broadband** for students who do not have technological capabilities to aid in access to distance learning.
  - b. **Provide laptops with curriculum** already available (downloaded) on the laptop for students and parents who do not have access to the Internet.
  - c. **Provide free WiFi and hotspots** from any and all Internet providers.
  - d. **Provide school supplies** to students, especially calculators, geometry supplies, science/lab study supplies.
2. **Provide food delivery to students** throughout the state that includes at least three meals a day, with fresh fruit and vegetables, seven days a week.
3. **Provide financial support to meet the needs of students and educators:**

- a. **Provide stipends for after school program educators** working in K-12 public and private schools.
- b. **Provide stipends, technology, and support for parents** to help educate their children at home.
- c. **Provide stipends for teachers who teach vocational education programs and preschool**
- d. **Refund tuition and fees to college students** at state schools and people in vocational education programs whose schools and programs were closed before the end of the school year. Eliminate student loan debt.
- e. **Make sure the degrees for teachers and educational assistants remain accredited** and valued.

**4. Support childcare providers and educators:**

- a. **Provide additional pay for educators and childcare providers** who work within the education system.
- b. **Provide COVID-19 testing and treatment to childcare providers and educators.**
- c. **Ensure paid sick leave for educators and childcare providers.**

**5. Immediately release children from incarceration and detention and provide protection, care and support for children who are in state custody of any kind:**

- a. **Immediate release** of all young people being held by Juvenile Court in local juvenile detention centers. Whenever possible, release youth in juvenile detention to the care of their family and/or guardians, without further intervention by child welfare agencies.
- b. **If no release options are possible, juvenile detention facilities must practice CDC guidelines** regarding protecting youth from COVID-19.
- c. **Ensure privately run halfway houses and group homes who are receiving state funding are practicing CDC guidelines** regarding protecting youth from COVID-19.
- d. **Young people who are in state custody, regardless of whether they are located in detention facilities, group homes, halfway houses or foster homes, should be given access to free testing and treatment** for COVID-19.
- e. **Ensure that young people's families are notified and continuously kept updated** on their child's status.
- f. **Develop procedures for young people who come into state custody on an emergency basis** during the COVID-19 crisis which includes screening them for COVID-19, and testing them as needed.
- g. **Immediately release any young person who is arrested** during the COVID-19 crisis to their parents or guardians.
- h. **Cease ICE enforcement and immediately release all youth who are being detained by ICE.**

- i. **Immediately discontinue detaining children for status offenses** (including truancy, underage offenses, incorrigibility) and immediately release all young people who are being held for status offenses.
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## Conclusion

Every resident of this state deserves to live well, with everything they need, and their innate human rights respected. Black people, Indigenous people, Latinx people, people of color, immigrants, refugees, white people, incarcerated people, workers, houseless people, cash-poor people, people living in rural and small towns, women, trans and gender nonconforming people, queer people, men, caregivers, elders, youth, students, teachers, disabled people, church, spiritual, mosque and temple folk, healers, farmers, people with mental illness, people in recovery, survivors and criminalized survivors, cooperative and small business owners, artists, musicians, and everyone else: we see and respect the humanity of one another and know we all deserve to be treated with dignity. We are coming together to express the desires of **all** of our communities and restore our righteous relationship with our state's resources and response.

During this COVID-19 crisis, we must take immediate action. We recognize that our demands are largely reflective of what our communities have always deserved and needed. This pandemic has only further exposed the multitude of ongoing crises that our communities have faced for a long time: incarceration, houselessness, worker exploitation, economic instability, insufficient healthcare, voter suppression, under-resourced education, environmental injustice, and more. Our organizing in this moment emerges from a long history of fighting these injustices in solidarity with people around the country and across the globe. Now is the time to bring forth the world that is worthy of all people in and out of Tennessee. Otherwise, our communities remain vulnerable to continued crises.

We, the signatories and crafters of these demands, come together across counties and across differences recognizing this particular moment of crisis as an opportunity for decision makers throughout our state to use their power for good, modeling for every other state in the U.S. Our work to fight for the implementation of these demands will continue until each of them are won. We will continue to fight for a Tennessee where all of our community needs are met and no one is left behind. We will not stay silent as our neighbors are criminalized and over policed while their communities are depleted of the resources they need to survive. Instead we will organize to make sure our tax dollars are used to provide free healthcare, transportation, food, and education. Not to police and incarcerate us. An inadequate response or anything less than what we deserve is unacceptable and we will remember. We are fighting not only for what needs to be done **right now** to prevent the further spread and lasting harm of COVID-19, but also for a commitment to long term recovery and structural transformation in order to meet the needs of **all** of our people.

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