



**Greater Milwaukee Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's Work. Our Hands.

June 15, 2020

Governor Tony Evers  
115 East, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers:

I am writing to you to request that you take action to reduce the prison population significantly during this pandemic—for the sake of the health of staff and inmates. Prisons, like nursing homes, are extremely vulnerable to a contagious virus like COVID-19. The prison at Waupun has 225 inmates and several staff who have been diagnosed positive. The Chaney Center had 18, I believe, who were diagnosed positive. There are other prisons with infected staff and residents.

There are inmates in the system who could safely and legally be released: most of the 2,850 old-law prisoners are eligible for release, a large number—probably close to 1,000—are eligible for compassionate, or extraordinary, release, and there are probably scores within three to four months of release, who could be released early.

As bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, including 120 congregations in the seven counties of southeast Wisconsin, I oversee many congregations in zip code areas that have high percentages of incarcerated adults, particularly in our African American communities, those already hit hard by the Coronavirus pandemic. I urge you to take the steps that are within your powers to reduce the prison populations and allow vulnerable individuals the opportunity to be safe, healthy, and restored to their communities.

Sincerely,

Bishop Paul D. Erickson