

Amistad Law Project

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://amistadlaw.org/pa-prison-pandemic-tracker>

Policy Issue Resources

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Amistad Law Project has tracked COVID-19's spread through the PA's state prisons.

Throughout the pandemic, we advocated for a dramatic reduction of the prison population to reduce the harm of the virus to incarcerated people and staff. We worked with two justice-minded data scientists, Jacob Parelman, Doctoral Candidate, and Matthew O'Donnell, PhD, from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania to track the effect of the pandemic on incarcerated people. Our work together illustrated how the virus impacted different state prisons over time. [Check out our PA Prison Pandemic Tracker.](#)

Additionally, our work unearthed a gross mismanagement of data tracking infections among incarcerated people by the Department of Corrections [which was covered by a number of news outlets across PA](#). This prompted the Philadelphia Inquirer Editorial Board to [write an op-ed calling for transparency and accountability](#) and eventually an op-ed calling on the Governor to [take action to release people from prison](#).

We believe that the story of COVID-19 in PA state prisons is ultimately a simple one. The state of Pennsylvania incarcerates too many people to possibly offer them meaningful care and protection at any time, but especially during a pandemic. Despite attempts at window dressing, the system is purely focussed on punishment.

