

We, the undersigned citizens of Monroe County, Indiana, are concerned that inadequate efforts to prevent the spread of COVID at the Monroe County Jail are putting employees and residents of the jail at risk of infection and thus also jeopardizing the health of our entire county.

Jails are notorious incubators and amplifiers of infectious diseases, even more so than prisons. COVID is no exception. The constant churn of people in and out of jails makes infection from the virus far more likely for everyone inside them. Indeed, a study conducted this summer of the Cook County Jail in Chicago found that the jail alone was responsible for 16% of all documented COVID-19 cases in the entire state.

Therefore, we urgently call on Sheriff Swain and the County Commissioners to implement the following policies at the jail:

- 1) All employees, contract staff, and visitors must wear appropriate masks that cover the mouth and nose anytime they are in contact with anyone else, including fellow employees, jail residents, and members of the public. Staff have matching Monroe county neck gaiters. Scientists have found these may be much less effective than even cotton masks.
- 2) All residents must wear masks when they are not in their assigned block.
- 3) Everyone residing in the jail must have access to hand soap available at all times, hot water working in all cells, cleaning supplies available every day, including paper towels and sanitizer, for all cells.
- 4) Staff must wear masks in the quarantine block. Nurses must wear masks at all times including when dispensing medications.
- 5) Everyone being released from jail must be tested before they depart. If they test positive, and cannot easily self-isolate for their first 10 days home, than safe lodging should be offered during that period outside the jail.

We also call upon Judges Haughton, Haseman, Diekhoff, and Fawcett in Monroe county:

- Use confinement in the jail during the pandemic only for the most urgent cases. A reasonable standard in the midst of a pandemic is that only those people should be held at the jail who present a greater danger to themselves or others than they would if they were infected.

Finally, we call on probation and parole officers:

- Refrain from sending people to jail for technical violations.

Sincerely yours,

Concerned residents of Monroe County

