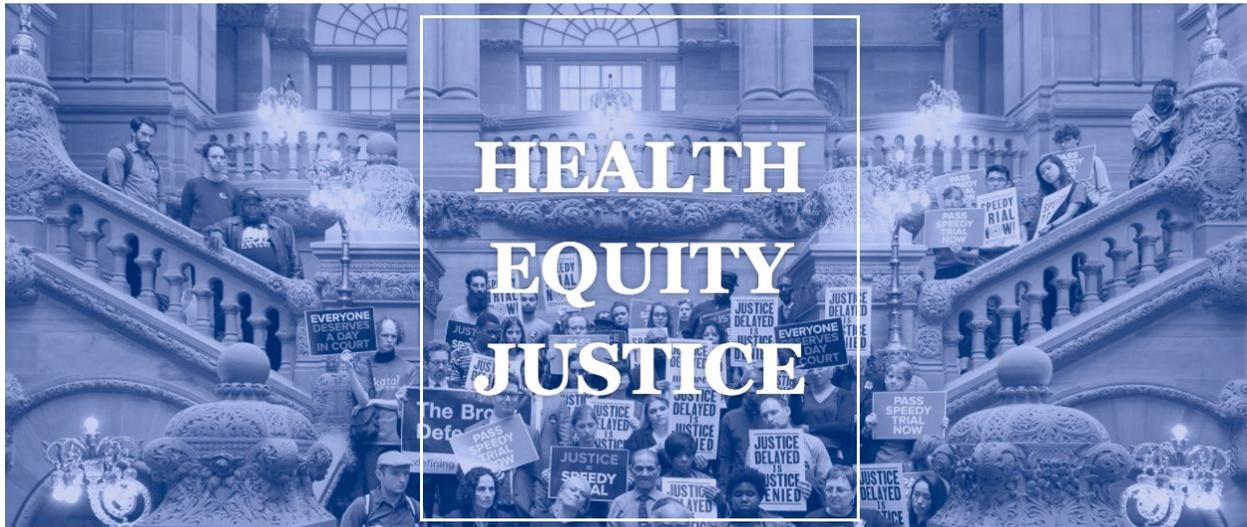


June 18, 2020

# Katal Weekly Update

Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice



*In this issue:*

**#DefendBlackLives, #FreeThemNow, page 2**

**#CovidBehindBars Update, page 3**

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**#DefendBlackLives, #FreeThemNow**



As community actions, protesting and rebellion over systemic racism and police brutality continue across the country with no clear end in sight, updates and reporting about the COVID-19 pandemic seem less prominent on the front pages. And as all 50 states are in stages of reopening after months of shutdown, it can seem like maybe the virus crisis is over -- but it's not, especially in jails and prisons. As noted in a recent NY Times article, [cases are still rising sharply](#) inside correctional facilities, and deaths related to Covid-19 in prisons across the country have soared by 73% since mid-May. *"By now, the five largest known clusters of the virus in the United States are not at nursing homes or meatpacking plants, but inside correctional institutions."*

In Connecticut, [prison healthcare workers are protesting](#) the state's outrageous lack of a plan. Healthcare workers say they are understaffed and at high risk of catching and dying from the disease; their patients are at high risk, their families and communities are at high risk. And while New York state has tested only about 3 percent of the state's jail and prison population, over [40 percent of those tests have come back positive](#). COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in prisons and jails. Deaths are rising. This is a human rights crisis.

And yet. Many of the governors and mayors who are, in the face of a national uprising, proclaiming that #BlackLivesMatter, are the same political leaders letting COVID-19 run rampant through their jails and prisons which are filled mostly with Black and brown people. That includes both CT Governor Lamont and NY Governor Cuomo.

We must hold elected officials like Cuomo and Lamont accountable - they cannot simultaneously express opposition to racism through performative social media posting and public claims of support for the Black community, while at the same time leaving people -- the majority of whom are Black and brown -- to die in jails and prisons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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As we protest systemic racism and demand transformation, let us also demand that Governors and mayors release people from prisons and jails in the face of COVID-19.

If you live in CT or NY, take action with us today to urge CT Gov. Lamont, NY Gov. Cuomo and state legislators to take immediate action NOW. It's easy and takes just a few minutes to make an impact! We must tell them: #BlackLivesMatter #FreeThemNOW

Connecticut residents, [take action here.](#)

New York residents, [take action here.](#)

## #CovidBehindBars Update

Amid the nationwide racial justice uprisings, reporting on COVID-19 has slowed, and further, Governor Cuomo has announced that Friday June 19, 2020 will be his last daily briefing on virus updates. However, COVID-19 continues to spread in jails and prisons in Connecticut and New York, and it's more important than ever that state governments act urgently to save the lives of their incarcerated constituents and mitigate the impact of the virus. Here's the latest:

**Connecticut:** Confirmed DOC cases of COVID-19: 1210

Article by CT News Junkie: [Prison Health Workers Stage Protest](#)

**New York State:** Confirmed DOC cases of COVID-19: 517

Article by THE CITY: [Coronavirus Testing Ramps Up in New York — But Not in State Prisons](#)

**New York City:** Confirmed DOC cases of COVID-19: 330 *\*As of June 12th, however this is not the total number of positive cases, just the most current numbers*

***Please be safe out there and take care of each other. Keep practicing social distancing, wear your mask, wash your hands, and check in on your neighbors. If you want to get involved, learn more about our work, or just connect, please don't hesitate to reach out - we're online and on socials via [@katalcenter](#).***

**Katal works to strengthen the people, policies, institutions, and movements that advance health, equity, and justice for everyone. Join us: [web](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)!  
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