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COVID-19 Amidst Carceral Contexts: The Overton Window of Political Possibility and Policy Change

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Seminal works over the last two decades have analyzed the socio-historical and political antecedents of the “[New Jim Crow](#),” the US criminal justice system’s undermining of the gains won in the civil rights movement. For many years, public health professionals and advocates, such as [Homer Venters](#) and [Brie Williams](#), have been raising the alarm regarding the quality of health care within jails and prisons and the unhealthy environmental factors associated with correctional facilities that contribute to poorer health outcomes for an already medically vulnerable population. Such assertions are echoed in an article, “[Addressing Mass Incarceration: A Clarion Call for Public Health](#),” written by affiliates of [Vera Institute of Justice](#), which cautions against public health and corrections systems working in silos; encourages a public health approach rather than a punitive paradigm; and calls on policymakers, researchers, and advocates to form new partnerships, rethink drug policy, and improve health information technology. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US has shone a new and brighter light on the vast inequities that exist within our public health system in terms of access, screening, and care. Correctional health is chief among them.