



If Black Lives Matter to Him, Polis Needs to Reduce Prison Population “COVID-19 Is Rising in Colorado Prisons, and It Is Black People Who Will Suffer the Most.”

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On Juneteenth 2020, Gov. Polis signed SB217, the Law Enforcement Accountability Act, a bill borne of the protests against police murders of black people around the country and in Colorado. At the bill's signing, Gov. Polis joined the chorus calling out that “Black Lives Matter” and urged that “we will make real change and bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice.”

But change takes work. Protecting Black lives takes action.

The governor's role in SB217 was largely symbolic – the stroke of his pen. The yeoman's work of that bill was done by Black, Indigenous, and Brown activists and legislators. So what is the governor doing to protect Black lives? In at least one critical context –Colorado's prisons – the answer is nothing. COVID-19 is rising in Colorado prisons, and it is Black people who will suffer the most. Black people living behind bars face a racist double whammy – because of their blackness they are more likely to be imprisoned, more likely to get COVID, and more likely to die from the virus.