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"In an effort to slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus our office has worked in collaboration with the Judiciary, Law Enforcement, Public Defender's office, St. Louis County Health Department, Justice Services and the County Executive and County Council. We are implementing protocols to limit the flow of people and activity in the Justice Center and courts in an effort to limit exposure to not only the public, but also jail and court staff as well as inmates in the justice center. Despite this pandemic, this will not diminish our capacity to issue charges and do our part to keep St. Louis County safe.

As a result of our collaborative efforts, we are prioritizing serious and violent cases, and also cases involving confined defendants. If a person is arrested for a nonviolent offense and does not pose a threat to a victim or the community, those individuals will be given a summons to appear in court at a later date. Individuals currently housed in the justice center that have been charged with nonviolent or low-level crimes and do not pose a threat to any victims or the community will be given consideration to be released pending their court date. This is consistent with our office policies that, working with our aforementioned partners, have already resulted in over a 30% decrease in the jail population, which are the lowest numbers since the early 2000's. Having said that, anyone who commits a violent or serious crime will be arrested and prosecuted.

Obviously, lowering the jail population in a safe and responsible manner will facilitate dealing with the virus and working to stop its spread. Preventative measures to contain the spread of the virus and keeping our community safe go hand-in-hand and we must all do our part. Be sure to constantly wash your hands and cover your mouth when coughing. If you or a family member are sick or showing symptoms, please stay home. Keep in mind, our elderly and those with underlying medical issues are most vulnerable to this virus. These preventative measures are how we look out for one another."

-Wesley Bell
St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney

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