

# SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC DEFENDER

MANOHAR RAJU – PUBLIC DEFENDER  
MATT GONZALEZ – CHIEF ATTORNEY



January 6th, 2021.

Dear Mayor Breed, Dr. Grant, Director Isen, and Director Carroll,

Thank you for your leadership and the tireless work you and your teams are doing to address the COVID-19 pandemic in San Francisco. You have saved many lives with your swift actions, and we are extremely grateful for your work.

As we enter the next phase of the battle to combat the virus, much discussion is taking place in the city, and throughout the state and country, on who is being prioritized for access to the vaccine.

While I am aware that decisions related to prioritization are being made at the state - and not the local - level, I also understand that we have city representatives involved in the state decision-making bodies that are determining how and when vaccines are distributed.

As decisions are being made regarding equitable and pragmatic vaccine distribution, I wanted to highlight the work the attorneys and staff in my office have been doing on the front lines of the health crisis as essential workers.

As you know, public defenders are constitutionally mandated to represent poor people charged with criminal offenses. Throughout the pandemic, our clients – many who suffer from homelessness, mental illness, and substance use issues – have continued to be arrested, incarcerated, and charged with crimes. Though we are doing everything we can remotely to ensure the safety of our staff and minimize exposure, much of our work can only be done in person. Our attorneys have been physically appearing in juvenile and adult courts to represent our clients at arraignments, preliminary hearings, and even jury trials. Our investigators have continued to be responsible for conducting thorough investigations by locating and interviewing witnesses, securing video, and serving subpoenas. Some of our staff have been physically visiting newly arrested clients in jail as part of our Pre-Release Unit in order to gather information to expedite their release. **Currently, 95 of our 205-person staff regularly engage with clients and members of the public in person.**

Given the nature of our work in the courts, the jails, and the community, our attorneys and staff are at risk for contracting the virus despite the precautions we take to avoid it.

---

**Adult Division - HOJ**  
555 Seventh Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
P: 415.553.1671  
F: 415.553.9810  
[www.sfpublicdefender.org](http://www.sfpublicdefender.org)

**Juvenile Division - YGC**  
375 Woodside Avenue, Rm. 118  
San Francisco, CA 94127  
P: 415.753.7601  
F: 415.566.3030

**Juvenile Division - JJC**  
258A Laguna Honda Blvd.  
San Francisco, CA 94116  
P: 415.753.8174  
F: 415.753.8175

**Clean Slate**  
P: 415.553.9337  
[www.sfpublicdefender.org/services](http://www.sfpublicdefender.org/services)

**Community Justice Center**  
P: 415.202.2832  
F: 415.563.8506

**Bayview Magic**  
P: 415.558.2428  
[www.bayviewmagic.org](http://www.bayviewmagic.org)

**MoMagic**  
P: 415.567.0400  
[www.momagic.org](http://www.momagic.org)

As soon as a vaccine is available, other key members of our team – paralegals, social workers, clerks, and medically vulnerable attorneys – will be able to resume their important face-to-face work so we can serve our clients as holistically as possible. Moreover, we want to be able to open our office – which has been closed to the public since the shelter-in-place mandate was issued – to the public so we can be more readily available to meet with clients and their families.

Finally, we ask that you also consider our most vulnerable clients – those inside our juvenile hall, the county jail, and in the prison system. As you are well aware, congregate settings, in particular, are extremely dangerous vectors for spreading the virus. Even short jail stays can put people at risk for contracting the virus.

Thank you again for your extraordinary efforts regarding COVID-19 and for your consideration of these factors.

I would much appreciate it if our office could be informed of vaccine distribution efforts and timelines moving forward. It is a question I am asked almost daily by staff members, so any updates related to our office would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mano Raju". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mano Raju  
San Francisco Public Defender