



**PALM BEACH COUNTY AWARDED ADDITIONAL \$1.4 MILLION BY MACARTHUR FOUNDATION
SAFETY AND JUSTICE CHALLENGE TO ADVANCE LOCAL JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORM**

**New Funding Will Help Support Initiatives Aimed at Safely
Reducing County's Jail Population and Reducing Racial Disparities**

West Palm Beach, Florida, February 5, 2020 – The Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) is the recipient of a \$1.4 million grant by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to continue building on efforts to advance local criminal justice system reform and safely reduce the County's jail population, bringing the Foundation's total investment in Palm Beach County to \$3.7 million to date. The grant is part of the [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), a \$217 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration and address racial and ethnic disparities in local criminal justice systems by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

The Safety and Justice Challenge is supporting local leaders in Palm Beach County and across the country determined to address one of the greatest drivers of over-incarceration in America – the misuse and overuse of jails. The County was first selected to join the Safety and Justice Challenge Network in 2015 and has since used the resources and funding provided by the Challenge to implement bold reforms, including:

- An increased focus on smart release options for pretrial inmates that began in September 2017;
- Quicker release for inmates who are experiencing homelessness or suffering from substance use or behavior disorders through linkages to community resources that began in February 2018;
- Creation of a Community Engagement Team to have meaningful conversations around our work;
- Implementation of Florida's first text message court data notification system in November 2018 to reduce failures to appear for court;
- Improved case processing efficiencies for pretrial inmates through new court hearings that began in July 2019 to reduce their length of stay;
- Creation of the PalmFUSE (Frequent Users Systems Engagement) project which began taking clients in the Summer of 2019 to break the cycle of incarceration and homelessness for low-level defendants with behavioral health challenges who frequent the County's jail; and,
- Measures to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, including expanding and deepening implicit bias training to reach over 700 professionals in local criminal justice system agencies.

As a result, the jail population in Palm Beach County is down 25 percent, resulting in 581 less people in jail on any given day (from 2,283 to 1,702). In addition, the average length of stay for pretrial inmates in jail is down, particularly for people of color: African Americans from 47 to 37 days, Latinos from 44 to 31 days, and whites from 21 to 18 days.

Today, Palm Beach County was one of a five jurisdictions selected for additional funding based on the promise and progress of work to date. This new round of funding will provide the CJC and partners with continued support and expert technical assistance to strengthen and expand strategies that address the main drivers of local jail incarceration and racial and ethnic disparities.



CJC Chairman Joseph Ianno, Jr., acknowledges the progress made and the support of the MacArthur Foundation by stating, “We are proud of the progress we have made in safely reducing the County’s jail population over the last three years. Our continued partnership with the MacArthur Foundation will allow us to reach our overall goal of eliminating unnecessary incarceration.”

The CJC’s member agencies and other partners, including the Public Defender, State Attorney, Sheriff, Judiciary, Clerk of Court, Florida Department of Corrections, U.S. Attorney, School Board, West Palm Beach and Delray Beach Police Departments, Clergy, Palm Healthcare Foundation Six Healthier Together Communities, The Lord’s Place, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, and Community Partners, have developed a comprehensive plan for additional reform strategies over the next two years. In addition to continuing the strategies listed above, these partners will implement new key strategies to create a safer, more effective system including:

- Reducing the time spent in jail for those who are experiencing homelessness and have substance use, or behavioral disorders through enhanced efforts to link these individuals to needed housing and services in the community;
- Expanding our text message court date notification system to those:
 - released from jail;
 - arrested and given a notice to appear in court by the police instead of being taken to jail; and,
 - on pretrial or probation supervision for their reporting appointments;
- Taking the location for felony probation reporting closer to defendants making it more convenient for them through a mobile reporting unit in order to reduce violations for missed appointments and reentry to jail.

Five years after its public launch, the Challenge Network has grown into a collaborative of 51 jurisdictions in 32 states modeling and inspiring reforms to create fairer, more effective local justice systems across the country.

“Local jurisdictions are proving it is possible for cities and counties to rethink local justice systems from the ground up, despite challenges and an ever-changing political environment,” said Laurie Garduque, MacArthur’s Director of Criminal Justice. “MacArthur remains committed to supporting jurisdictions as they set ambitious reform goals and pursue smart solutions that safely reduce jail populations, address disparities, and eliminate ineffective, inefficient and unfair practices.”

Palm Beach County Circuit Court Judge Daliah Weiss, who sits on the criminal division bench and is a member of the project’s Core Team, said: “The Safety and Justice Challenge has been instrumental in our efforts to increase fairness and equity in our criminal justice system. We are grateful for this additional support from the MacArthur Foundation as we continue our work.”

Several of the nation's leading criminal justice organizations will continue to provide technical assistance and counsel to the CJC and the other jurisdictions involved in the Challenge. These include the Center for Court Innovation, Everyday Democracy, Nexus Community Partners, the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York, JFA Institute, the Justice Management Institute, Justice System Partners, the Pretrial Justice Institute, Policy Research, Inc., the Vera Institute of Justice, the W. Haywood Burns Institute, Urban Institute, and Bennett Midland.



More information about the work underway in Palm Beach County can be found on <http://discover.pbcgov.org/criminaljustice/Pages/default.aspx> as well as on www.SafetyandJusticeChallenge.org.

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About the MacArthur Foundation

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supports creative people, effective institutions, and influential networks building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. MacArthur is placing a few big bets that truly significant progress is possible on some of the world's most pressing social challenges, including advancing global climate solutions, decreasing nuclear risk, promoting local justice reform in the U.S., and reducing corruption in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria. In addition to the MacArthur Fellows Program and the global *100&Change* competition, the Foundation continues its historic commitments to the role of journalism in a responsive democracy as well as the vitality of our headquarters city, Chicago. More information about the Foundation's criminal justice reform work can be found at www.macfound.org/criminaljustice.

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