



Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation



Palm Beach County
Board of County Commissioners

**MEDIA CONFERENCE TO BE HELD
OCTOBER 4, 2017; 12:30 P.M.
PALM BEACH COUNTY COURTHOUSE CAFETERIA
205 N. Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach, FL 33401**

**PALM BEACH COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION AWARDED \$2 MILLION
BY MACARTHUR FOUNDATION SAFETY AND JUSTICE CHALLENGE
TO ADVANCE LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS**

**New Funding Will Help Palm Beach County Build on Progress Toward
Safely Reducing Local Jail Population**

West Palm Beach, Florida, October 4, 2017 – The John D. And Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation today announced a \$2 million grant to the Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) to continue building on local efforts to implement criminal justice system reforms and safely reduce Palm Beach County’s jail population. The grant is part of the [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), a more than \$100 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

The Safety and Justice Challenge is supporting leaders in Palm Beach County and across the country who are determined to tackle the greatest drivers of over-incarceration in their local jails. Palm Beach County was first selected to join the collaborative Safety and Justice Challenge Network in 2015, after a highly competitive selection process that drew applications from nearly 200 jurisdictions in 45 states and territories. Today, Palm Beach County was one of eight counties selected for additional funding based on the promise and progress of work to date. The counties join ten other Challenge jurisdictions already receiving deep investment from the Foundation to implement local reform, and 20 sites receiving support for a single innovative project or program. This new round of funding will provide the CJC with additional support and expert technical assistance to implement strategies that address the main drivers of local jail incarceration and identify system practices that can take a particularly heavy toll on people of color, low-income communities, and those with mental health and substance abuse issues.

“The overarching goal of our work is to eliminate unnecessary incarceration, and our participation in the Safety and Justice Challenge has been crucial in helping us make headway toward this goal,” said Circuit Court Judge Jeffrey Colbath. “The additional support will help us continue this work, while also pushing our justice reform efforts further.”

In partnership with local law enforcement, corrections officials, defenders, prosecutors, judges, community members, and other stakeholders, the CJC has developed a comprehensive plan for local justice system reforms with the goal of reducing the average daily jail population by 17 percent over two years.



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Key strategies and initiatives to achieve this goal and create a safer, more effective system include:

- Safely reducing the pretrial jail population through the use of a validated risk assessment instrument and enhanced pretrial services;
- Improving case processing efficiency;
- Ending the cycle of incarceration and homelessness for frequent low-level offenders with mental health issues;
- Identifying and addressing racial and ethnic disparities in our jail population; and,
- Building data capacity to continuously analyze and improve the system.

Two years after its public launch, the Challenge Network has grown into a collaborative of 40 counties, cities, and states modeling and inspiring reforms to create fairer, more effective local justice systems across the country. The jurisdictions involved with the Challenge are already yielding promising initial results toward reducing jail populations and expanding alternatives to incarceration, and by 2019, the cities, counties, and states supported by the Challenge aim to have reduced local jail populations by 17 to 30 percent.

“We are encouraged by the promise of the Network’s results to date, and the long-term benefits that reforms will yield for individuals, families, and communities,” said Laurie Garduque, Director for Justice Reform for the Foundation. “Leaders from these jurisdictions are proving that everyone benefits when local justice systems are made to be fairer, to responsibly steward taxpayer dollars, and to safely improve outcomes for families and communities. Given the promise of these efforts, other local leaders should take notice of the solutions being piloted by the cities, counties, and states supported by the Challenge and begin rethinking jails in their own jurisdictions.”

Since joining the Challenge, Palm Beach County’s key initiatives have included: the creation of a Driving Under Suspension Diversion Court; Operation Fresh Start to vacate outstanding warrants for low-level offenses without incarceration; a data dashboard for the CJC website; and increased data capacity to analyze the system and make improvements. In addition, rigorous planning began in 2016 around two more strategies: the implementation of a validated risk assessment instrument and risk management matrix to guide judicial release decisions at first appearance hearings; and the creation of a FUSE (Frequent Users Systems Engagement) Project to divert frequent users of the jail and homeless systems into housing and needed services. The grant from the MacArthur Foundation will enable Palm Beach County to build upon these efforts and initiate new strategies that will safely reduce the jail population.

“Palm Beach County is proud to be a part of the Safety and Justice Challenge,” said Palm Beach County Mayor Paulette Burdick. “We are committed to criminal justice system reform that benefits our families and communities through the smart use of our tax dollars and improved outcomes for those involved in the system. We are focused on reducing unnecessary jail use to make communities healthier, fairer, and safer. We are encouraged by past progress and look forward to continuing these critical efforts in partnership with the communities we serve.”



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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: the Center for Court Innovation, the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York, the Justice Management Institute, Justice System Partners, the Pretrial Justice Institute, the Vera Institute of Justice, Policy Research, Inc., and the W. Haywood Burns Institute.

More information about the work underway in Palm Beach County can be found on discover.pbcgov.org/criminaljustice 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 over-incarceration, global climate change, nuclear risk, and significantly increasing financial capital for the social sector. In addition to the MacArthur Fellows Program, the Foundation continues its historic commitments to the role of journalism in a responsible and responsive democracy, as well as, the strength and vitality of our headquarters city, Chicago. More information about the Foundation's criminal justice reform work can be found at www.macfound.org/criminaljustice.

Media Contact for the CJC:

Kristina Henson, Executive Director

561-355-4943

khenson@pbcgov.org

Palm Beach County 2017 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet

We've got some issues to fix:

- Despite having an incarceration rate 58 percent below the national average, there is still more room for reducing the Palm Beach County jail population.
- Studies prove that pretrial detention causes disruption in the stability of defendants, families, and communities. It leads to higher re-arrest rates, and produces worse case outcomes with more back-end incarceration.
- Palm Beach County's jail cost taxpayers 14 cents of every county tax dollar.
- African Americans are significantly overrepresented in the county jail, making up 19 percent of the county population but 50 percent of the jail population. Hispanics represent 21 percent of the population and 17 percent of the jail population.
- African Americans (44 days) and Hispanics (40 days) have a much longer average length of stay as compared to whites (25 days).
- Some people frequent our systems with no clear path for ending their cycle. From July 2016 through June 2017, Palm Beach County had 108 individuals admitted to the jail three times or more who also accessed homeless services within the County. These individuals used 5,648 bed days in the county jail costing \$762,480 (bed days x \$135 per day).
- In 2016, 3,528 people were admitted to the Palm Beach County jail for a Failure To Appear representing 14 percent of all jail admissions. In all but two of those admissions, the underlying charges were non-violent felonies or low-level charges.

We've got solutions to these issues:

- Supported with \$2 million from the Safety and Justice Challenge, Palm Beach County will implement forward-looking, smart solutions, to address these issues and reduce the jail population by 17 percent over the next two years.
- Strategies will touch major decision-points in the system, ranging from diversion to pretrial release to case processing, and are embraced across public safety and community partners. These data-driven innovations will reduce jail bed usage while ensuring the county prioritizes public safety while ensuring access to critically needed services for those most in need.
- Over the next two years the county will employ five strategies: an increased focus on risk assessment and smart release options for pretrial inmates; improved case processing efficiencies for pretrial inmates who are not released; diversion and warrant reduction for low-level defendants; increased data capacity and analysis of the local system; and measures to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, including implicit bias training for all criminal justice agencies.
- The county will roll out a text message-based court data notification system to reduce failures to appear and to prevent new warrants for low-level defendants.
- A new Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) project will break the cycle of incarceration and homelessness for frequent low-level defendants with behavioral health challenges.

Who is helping to affect change?

- The strategies and initiatives outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by the Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission and its member organizations including the offices of the State Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff, Judiciary, Municipal Law Enforcement, and School District, along with other government and community organizations.

MacArthur Foundation

September 22, 2017

The Honorable Paulette Burdick
Mayor
District 2, Palm Beach County
301 North Olive Avenue, Suite 1201
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Dear Mayor Burdick,

On behalf of the MacArthur Foundation, I am writing to confirm the good news that Palm Beach County has received renewed support to implement its comprehensive reform proposal as Safety and Justice Challenge Network site, and will receive an award of \$2,000,000 over two years, to participate in the next phase of this effort to create more effective local justice systems across the country.

In the coming days, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation will announce a new round of \$11.3 million in funding to eight counties as part of its Safety and Justice Challenge, a more than \$100 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. Since joining the Challenge, sites are seeing reductions in their jail populations and the early impacts of changes designed to create fairer, more effective justice systems that protect public safety. Palm Beach County was one of eight sites chosen to receive an increase in its award to continue its participation in the Network. The eight sites join ten other Challenge jurisdictions already receiving deep investment from the Foundation to implement local reform, and 20 sites receiving support for a single innovative project or program. Additional funding opportunities for jurisdictions in and out of the Challenge Network will be announced next year. We want to congratulate you for your leadership and the hard work in developing the plans for reform.

With the Foundation's support, a diverse leadership team representing Palm Beach County completed an intensive period of collaborative planning, working with experts to analyze local data, identify drivers of unnecessary jail incarceration, and devise ambitious plans for targeting them. The Foundation considered the progress your county has made to date, the quality of your plan, the strength of your metrics, the coherence of your team, and the commitment and engagement of key elected and appointed officials. On the strength of these measures, our Board has approved this two-year implementation award of \$2,000,000. Depending on continued commitment and demonstrable progress, there is the potential for additional funding.

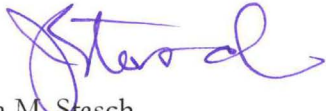
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
140 South Dearborn St., Suite 1200 Chicago, Illinois 60603-5285
Telephone 312.726.8000 www.macfound.org

The Honorable Paulette Burdick

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Two years after its public launch, the Safety and Justice Challenge Network has grown into a collaborative of counties, cities, and states modeling and inspiring reforms to create fairer, more effective local justice systems across the country. The Challenge is providing support to local leaders who are determined to tackle a fundamental driver of over-incarceration in America – the misuse and overuse of jails. Network members are already yielding promising initial results toward safely reducing jail populations and expanding alternatives to incarceration, and by 2019, the cities, counties, and states supported by the Challenge aim to reduce their local jail populations by 18 to 30 percent.

Best regards,



Julia M. Stasch

President

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation