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## **County Receives Additional Funding in Safety and Justice Challenge** *MacArthur Foundation Grant Sustains Progress in Local Justice System*

**PITTSBURGH** – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and President Judge Kim Berkeley Clark announced today that the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has selected Allegheny County to receive a \$1.17 million grant to sustain its progress to safely reduce the county jail population and eliminate racial inequities. The grant is part of the [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), a \$323 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. With this most recent award, a total of \$5.22 million has been invested in the county for this initiative.

The Safety and Justice Challenge is supporting local leaders in Allegheny County and across the country in these efforts. The county was first selected to join the collaborative Safety and Justice Challenge Network in 2017 with funding for [a targeted project focused on building data dashboards to monitor key indicators in the criminal justice system](#). Since receiving the Safety and Justice Challenge grant in 2018, the population of the Allegheny County Jail is down 33%.

“This effort is part of a larger commitment Allegheny County has made to preventing criminal justice involvement and safely reducing reliance on incarceration,” said Fitzgerald. “In addition to the two decades of work by the county’s Criminal Justice Advisory Board, we have been fortunate to work with the Institute of Politics, the Criminal Justice Advisory Board, the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab and the MacArthur Foundation, through its Safety and Justice Challenge, to dedicate resources and efforts to affect change in our criminal justice system. We’re fortunate to have these many partners as we work to impact the community in a positive way.”

Allegheny County was one of 11 jurisdictions selected in this most recent round of funding, again based on the promise and progress of work to date. This new round of funding will provide Allegheny County with continued support and expert technical assistance to strengthen and expand strategies that address the main drivers, and resulting racial inequities, of local jail incarceration.

The response in Allegheny County to the COVID-19 pandemic, including a 77% reduction in jail bookings and the rapid review and release of people being held in the jail, demonstrated the ability to achieve a significantly smaller jail population without compromising public safety.

President Judge Kim Berkeley Clark said, “I am deeply appreciative of the daily work of all our judges. We have one of the finest criminal benches in the country. Judges are required to make difficult decisions on a daily basis while considering the safety of the community and the rights and interests of both victims and defendants. I am grateful for the care, effect and thoughtfulness that they put into each of the decisions that they make.”

The plan outlined by the county team is focused on sustaining the successful reforms that have been completed to date by ensuring that previously implemented strategies continue. These strategies include:

- Completing implementation of a revalidated Pretrial assessment (establishing ongoing process to track outcomes);
- Implementing court processes to reduce the time to disposition resulting in a reduction in length of stay in jail;

- Expanding successful efforts to provide representation at first appearance (hiring a project manager to leverage resources aimed at providing representation at all preliminary arraignments); and,
- Developing alternatives to arrest and incarceration of people in crisis due to substance use, mental illness, or homelessness.

Allegheny County, with its robust criminal justice analytics infrastructure, can build tools to support implementation of strategies and measure outcomes for many of the Safety and Justice Challenge efforts.

More than seven years since its public launch, the Safety and Justice Challenge has grown into a collaborative network of 74 sites in 33 states modeling and inspiring reforms to create more fair, just and equitable local justice systems across the country.

“I am proud to celebrate and reflect on the progress made by the Safety and Justice Challenge cities and counties over the past seven years. This initiative shows that communities can bridge their differences in pursuit of a more equitable and just response to people in conflict with the law,” said Laurie Garduque, MacArthur Foundation’s Director of Criminal Justice. “With innovative and evidence-based solutions now in place, the next phase of the initiative must look to sustain that progress moving forward. We look forward to supporting these jurisdictions as they continue to pursue smart, data-driven strategies to safely reduce jail populations and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in jails.”

A number of the nation’s leading criminal justice organizations will continue to provide technical assistance and counsel to Allegheny County and its partners, and the other jurisdictions involved in the Challenge. These include Activating Change, the Alliance for Safety and Justice, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, the Brennan Center for Justice, the Center for American Progress, the Council on Criminal Justice, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the Center for Court Innovation, Everyday Democracy, the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, JFA Institute, JustLeadershipUSA, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, the Leadership Conference Education Fund, the National Association of Counties, the National Center for State Courts, the National Center for Victims of Crime, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National League of Cities, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association, the Pretrial Justice Institute, Policy Research, Inc., Prison Policy Initiative, R Street Institute, Race Forward, Shriver Center on Poverty Law, The Justice Management Institute, the Vera Institute of Justice, the W. Haywood Burns Institute, Urban Institute, and Bennett Midland.

More information about the work underway in Allegheny County can be found at [www.alleghenycounty.us/safety-justice-challenge/index.aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/safety-justice-challenge/index.aspx) as well as on [www.SafetyandJusticeChallenge.org](http://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](http://www.macfound.org/criminaljustice).

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