



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



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County Awarded \$2M by MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge *Grant Will Help Build on Progress to Advance Local Justice System Reform*

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and President Judge Jeffrey A. Manning announced today that the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has awarded Allegheny County a \$2 million grant to continue building on efforts to reform the local criminal justice system and safely reduce the county jail population. The grant is part of the [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), a \$148 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

The Safety and Justice Challenge is supporting local leaders in Allegheny County and across the country determined to tackle one of the greatest drivers of over-incarceration in America – the misuse and overuse of jails. 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](#).

“We have been fortunate to have strong partnerships through our county’s Criminal Justice Advisory Board that have allowed us to work collaboratively to address issues in our criminal justice system,” said Fitzgerald. “With the MacArthur Foundation funding, and the Safety and Justice Challenge network, we will be able to leverage these additional partners to have an even greater impact on the many issues that are part of the criminal justice system. We are grateful for the resources, and look forward to working together to achieve these goals and improve our community.”

Allegheny County was one of 13 jurisdictions selected for additional funding based on the promise and progress of work to date. With the funding, the county joins 20 other Challenge jurisdictions already receiving deep investment from the Foundation to implement local reform, in addition to 12 new jurisdictions joining the Safety and Justice Challenge Network. This new round of funding will provide the county and partners with additional support and expert technical assistance to implement strategies that address the main drivers of local jail incarceration, including unfair and ineffective practices that take a particularly heavy toll on people of color, low-income communities, and people with mental health and substance abuse issues.

“The Courts have long been focused on safely reducing overpopulation at the Allegheny County Jail and implementing reforms in the setting of bonds for inmates. We are committed to recognizing the effects of incarceration on individual inmates, the justice system, and our communities,” said Manning. “We are grateful to have the support of the MacArthur Foundation as we strive to improve the way justice is dispensed, particularly in Allegheny County.”

In partnership with the Courts and the District Attorney’s Office, and including departments under the executive branch, Allegheny County has developed a comprehensive plan for local justice system reforms with the goal of reducing the average daily jail population by 20 percent over the next two years. Key strategies to achieve this goal and create a safer, more effective system include:

- Expanding public defense;
- Diverting individuals to behavioral health and substance abuse treatment;
- Expediting the resolution of cases involving people detained for probation violations;
- Improving case processing efficiency;
- Expanding and enhancing pretrial services; and,
- Increasing community engagement.

Three years after its public launch, the Challenge Network has grown into a collaborative of 52 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. For example, since joining the initiative, Philadelphia has decreased its jail population by 36 percent and Cook County, Illinois by 26 percent.

“There is growing demand for criminal justice reform across the country, and local jurisdictions are leading the way,” said Laurie Garduque, MacArthur’s Director of Justice Reform. “MacArthur is increasing our investment because we are seeing promising results and an appetite for more reform as evidenced by the diversity and creativity of the solutions implemented and tested across the Network. While progress is not always easy, and there is no single solution or quick fix, these jurisdictions are proving it is possible to rethink local justice systems from the ground up with forward-thinking, smart solutions.”

Several 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: 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 Allegheny County can be found at 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.

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