

November 17, 2021

Kyle Patterson  
Chair, Champaign County Board  
Brookens Administrative Center  
1776 East Washington Street  
Urbana, IL 61802-4581



To the members of the Champaign County Board,

We, the undersigned members of the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice, write to express our grave concern about the possibility of Champaign County approving a proposal to enlarge and renovate the satellite jail in Urbana. The Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice is a statewide network of advocacy, community, faith and legal organizations representing thousands of Illinoisans who are committed to working for racial and economic justice.

Over the last ten years, the number of people incarcerated in Champaign County Jail sites has been trending downward. Since 2012, community members have rejected the County's efforts to build new jails on multiple occasions, instead focusing on the need to build programs. We implore the County Board to hear their call.

Of the nearly 200 Champaign County residents incarcerated in the county jails, nearly 70% of them are detained pretrial. They have not been convicted of a crime and are legally presumed innocent. Many are jailed solely because they cannot afford to pay a money bond—an unconstitutional practice set to end in Illinois by January 1, 2023 when the Pretrial Fairness Act takes full effect. After Illinois ends the use of money bond, the number of people in county jails is expected to decrease significantly. In preparation for these changes, the Champaign County Board can best serve its residents by exploring and investing in viable and supportive alternatives to pretrial incarceration. These will have more long-lasting benefits than any investment in a jail expansion could hope to achieve.

Pretrial incarceration inflicts myriad harms on the people subjected to it. Many people face economic destabilization, including loss of work or home, and even loss of custody of their children due to time spent in jail while awaiting trial. Even 24-72 hours is enough to put this devastating domino effect into motion, and these harms disproportionately impact Black, Brown, and poor community members. Jailing people for weeks or months can also have terrible impacts on their mental and physical health because jails consistently lack capacity to provide quality mental and physical health care, including substance use disorder treatment. Infusing millions of dollars into the expansion of this type of facility promises to do harm to rather than good for Champaign County residents.

It is especially troubling that this proposal includes investing \$5 million of the county's COVID-19 relief funds in the county jail. Rather than spend COVID-19 relief funds on incarceration, we implore the board to consider investing these resources into institutions and infrastructure that have been shown to truly promote community safety and well-being. These include housing, job

opportunities, mental and physical health care in the community, and evidence-based, human-centered violence prevention initiatives. Investing in programs like these will guarantee great improvements in the lives of Champaign County residents, both people currently in the community and incarcerated people who would be better served by receiving supportive services in the community. Not only are these suggested spending allocations for COVID-19 relief funds more evidence-based and effective, they are also more forward-looking.

Thank you for your consideration, and we hope you will prioritize the best interests of the residents you serve. By funding community resources and violence prevention programs instead of jail expansion, Champaign has the opportunity to create the safe communities we all desire. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at [info@endmoneybond.org](mailto:info@endmoneybond.org). We eagerly await your decision.

Sincerely,

The Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice

A Just Harvest  
ACLU of Champaign County  
ACLU of Illinois  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |  
Chicago  
Believers Bail Out  
Black Lives Matter: Bloomington  
Normal  
Champaign County Bailout Coalition  
Change Peoria  
Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair  
Courts  
Chicago Community Bond Fund  
Community Renewal Society  
Faith Coalition for the Common Good  
IL- NOW (National Organization for  
Women)  
Jolt Harm Reduction

Justice and Witness Ministry of  
Chicago Metropolitan Association  
– Illinois Conference United  
Church of Christ  
Nehemiah Trinity Rising  
Religious Action Center of Reform  
Judaism (RAC-IL)  
Restore Justice  
Rockford Urban Ministries  
Trinity United Church of Christ  
The People's Lobby  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Southsiders Organized for Unity and  
Liberation  
United Congregations of MetroEast  
Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry  
of Illinois  
Workers Center for Racial Justice

CC: Members of the Board: Jacob Paul, Jim Gross, Jodi Wolken, Diane Micheals, Aaron Esry, Stanley C. Harper, Brad Passalacqua, Jim McGuire, Leah Taylo, Samantha Carter, Jenny Lokshin, Eric Thorsland, Kyle Patterson, Stephanie Fortado, Emily Rodriguez, Jennifer Straub, Steve Summers, Chris Stohr, Mary King, Lorraine Cowart