

December 19, 2022

Dear Winnebago County State's Attorney J. Hanley,

As your constituents and faith leaders of this community, we are calling upon you to drop your lawsuit against the Pretrial Fairness Act and allow this visionary civil rights legislation to go into effect in Winnebago County and across Illinois on January 1st. Leaders throughout the judicial system and at all levels of government have been diligently working to prepare to implement these changes that will safely reduce pretrial incarceration and end the unjust practice of money bond. Your actions over the last several months have led to confusion and frustration. We are disappointed to see you spreading fear and participating in frivolous lawsuits to try and undermine this historic reform instead of working to keep our communities safe by ensuring its successful implementation.

Do we want to be remembered in history as the community that postponed progress in civil rights? It would be shameful to witness neighboring counties appropriately adopting this new law while our State's Attorney does everything in his power to delay the inevitable by needlessly forcing our people to pay a ransom to get out of jail, or remain incarcerated without evening being convicted of a crime simply because they're poor.

Isaiah 10:1 says, "What sorrow awaits the unjust judges and those who issue unfair laws. They deprive the poor of justice." If you continue down this path and intentionally maintain the unjust system of money bond that has been so widely condemned, the sinful result will indeed be continuing to deprive the poor of justice. Do you know what it's like to have to choose between paying a money bond for a family member or paying rent? Do you know the pain of not being able to afford the bond for your loved one and watching helplessly as they lose their job? You have the power to reduce poverty and the harm caused by wealth-based jailing in our community, please do it!

You've had opportunities just like all of us to share input with our state elected officials, and at the end of the day the Pretrial Fairness Act as part of the SAFE-T Act passed the Illinois legislature and was signed into law by the Governor because it was broadly supported by Illinoisians. During the Veto session, some members of the State's Attorneys Association worked alongside advocates to help modify the law to ensure we reduce the harm of pretrial jailing while keeping our communities safe. They worked to ensure that their concerns did not uphold progress.

Why do you want to continue robbing poor people in our community? As counties across the state have been preparing to enact this positive change and keep more resources in communities that need them most, you are obstructing justice by seeking to delay a law supported by Representatives West and Vella and Senator Stadelman. The law as it will be implemented by the rest of Illinois brings positive changes we have long been advocating for, but you are trying to leave Winnebago County behind. It's time to do the right thing and drop the lawsuit.

Signed,

Rev. Violet Johnicker	Rabbi Binah Wing	Rev. Michael Hafele
Rev. Jane Eesley	Rev. Dr. Eric Lemonholm	Rev. James Roberts
Rev. Carolyn Lukasick	Rev. David W. Jones	Elder Sonji Collins
Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson	Rev. Frank Langhoff	Rev. Diane B. Tomlinson
Rev. K. Edward Copeland	Rev. Joseph Warner	Rev. Jim Roberts
	Rev. Stephen Loch Bowie	