



November 18, 2024

The Honorable [REDACTED]
Cook County Commissioner [REDACTED]
118 N. Clark St., Room 567
Chicago, IL 60602
Sent via email to [REDACTED]

Re: Community Support for Housing Cook County's Electronic Monitoring Program within the Office of the Chief Judge

Dear Commissioner [REDACTED],

We, the undersigned community, legal, policy organizations, and service providers collectively represent thousands of people from communities across Cook County. Our organizations have represented and supported countless individuals subjected to pretrial house arrest with electronic monitoring and have researched pretrial best practices across the country. We write to you in support of the proposal to streamline Cook County's two electronic monitoring systems by housing all pretrial electronic monitoring under the Office of the Chief Judge.

This transition is both fiscally responsible and in line with the recommendations made by CGL and Chicago Appleseed in their 2022 [Electronic Monitoring Review](#) commissioned by the Cook County Board of Commissioners. The Review found that the "current system of dual pretrial release programs, one under the Sheriff and one managed by Adult Probation, is inefficient, confusing, and serves no positive program objective." The plan to bring these two programs together would ensure that Cook County mirrors the rest of Illinois, where pretrial electronic monitoring programs are operated by Pretrial Services under the judicial branch. The Cook County Sheriff's electronic monitoring only came into existence in response to the *Duran* consent decree that required the county to reduce incarceration in Cook County Jail. This consent decree was lifted in 2017. It is past time to eliminate Cook County's extra electronic monitoring program.

Currently, Cook County spends more than \$35 million dollars annually to operate these duplicative programs. This is particularly concerning because [there is no evidence showing that this technology improves community safety](#). The Electronic Monitoring Review found that electronic monitoring had "no substantial effect on failure to appear rates and rearrest rates, or on rearrest rates for violent crimes." [A 2021 study](#) by the Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts showed that people on electronic monitoring have *the same* extremely low rates of re-arrest as people who are released pretrial without monitors.

During the budget hearings, concerns were raised about [reforms to electronic monitoring that were included in the Pretrial Fairness Act](#). These concerns, however, are unwarranted. Nothing in the law prevents the Cook County Sheriff (or any supervising agency) from monitoring individuals during essential movement. To the contrary, every person on electronic monitoring is being tracked using GPS technology at all times. There is never a moment where the location of a person on electronic monitoring is unknown. The Pretrial Fairness Act simply included a provision guaranteeing that people on electronic monitoring be given two opportunities each week to perform essential tasks like grocery shopping and attending medical appointments. These reforms were made law in direct response to practices in Cook County that jeopardized the health and safety of people on electronic monitoring. These reforms do not compromise the county's ability to oversee people subjected to electronic monitoring; in fact, they promote public safety by ensuring that people are able to conduct essential tasks needed to live a healthy life and contribute to the households in which they are living.

While Cook County has in many ways led the nation in pretrial reforms, we remain an outlier in our overreliance on electronic monitoring. Jurisdictions like New Jersey have shown that pretrial jailing can be reduced without increasing the use of electronic monitoring. While we are encouraged by the [18.8% decrease in the number of people on the Sheriff's electronic monitoring program](#) since the Pretrial Fairness Act took effect, more progress can be made by streamlining all pretrial electronic monitoring under the Office of the Chief Judge. We encourage the county to begin a rigorous education program with court stakeholders to further decrease the use of electronic monitoring.

Over the last decade, Cook County has successfully reformed pretrial practices and reduced pretrial incarceration. The unification of the Pretrial Services and Sheriff's electronic monitoring programs would streamline the use of this technology, save the county money, make the system easier to navigate for people on electronic monitoring, and be an important first step towards responding to the recommendations made in the County's own 2022 Electronic Monitoring Review.

Thank you for your leadership in pretrial reform. If you would like to discuss the consolidation of the county's electronic monitoring programs, please email us at info@endmoneybond.org.

Sincerely,

The Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice and supporting organizations:

A Just Harvest
Access Living
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago
Beyond Legal Aid
BlackRoots Alliance
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Cabrini Green Legal Aid
CAIR Chicago
Cannabis Equity IL Coalition

Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts
Children's Best Interest Project
Chicago Community Bond Fund
Chicago Council of Lawyers
Chicago Torture Justice Center
Chicago United Solidarity Project (CUSP)
Chicago Votes

Civil Rights and Police Accountability Project
of the University of Chicago Law
School

Color of Change

Community Renewal Society

Equality Illinois

Equity and Transformation

Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project

FirstFollowers

FLAP-Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy
Project

Free Us

Illinois Collaboration on Youth

Illinois NOW

Illinois Prison Project

Illinois Social Justice Alliance

Indivisible Chicago Alliance

League Of Women Voters of Cook County

Liberation Library

Loevy + Loevy

Lucy Parsons Labs

National Lawyers Guild Chicago

NAMI Illinois

NAMI South Suburbs of Chicago

Nehemiah Trinity Rising

Nikkei Uprising

Phalanx Family Services

Pretrial Justice Institute

Prison Policy Initiative

Represent Justice

Restore Justice

She Votes Illinois

SisterReach Illinois

Smart Decarceration Project - University of
Chicago

Southsiders Organized For Unity and Liberation

TASC

The People's Lobby

To Defend If Necessary, LLC

Transformative Justice Law Project of IL

Trinity United Church of Christ

Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of
Illinois

Workers Center For Racial Justice