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MILWAUKEE COUNTY AWARDED ADDITIONAL \$1.34 MILLION BY MACARTHUR FOUNDATION SAFETY AND JUSTICE CHALLENGE TO RETHINK LOCAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

New Funding Will Support Initiatives Aimed at Preventing Unnecessary Jail Use and Advancing Racial Equity

MILWAUKEE – February 9, 2021 – By way of the Milwaukee Community Justice Council (CJC), Milwaukee County is the recipient of a \$1.34 million grant by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to continue building on efforts to rethink the local criminal justice system, prevent unnecessary jail use, and eliminate racial inequities. The grant brings the Foundation’s total investment in Milwaukee County to \$5.64 million to date, and is part of the [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), a \$246 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration and advance racial equity in local criminal justice systems by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

The Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) is supporting local leaders, individuals directly and most impacted by the justice system, and the broader community in Milwaukee County and across the country who are determined to address one of the greatest drivers of over-incarceration in America – the misuse and overuse of jails. Milwaukee County was first selected to join the SJC Network in 2016 and has since used the resources and funding provided by the initiative to implement evidence-based strategies.

Among its recent SJC accomplishments, Milwaukee County increased capacity for diversion and deferred prosecution agreements, launched a court reminder program, enhanced its mental health diversion program, expanded peer support services, and established a Transitions Clinic to help returning citizens with medical needs.

Today, Milwaukee was one of 15 jurisdictions selected for additional funding based on the promise and progress of work to date. This new round of funding will provide system and community partners 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.

Building on Milwaukee County’s progress to date is especially critical as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustices against communities of color reinforce the need to transform how the system operates. Criminal justice and public health officials worked together

to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of staff, individuals in county care, and the general public. While prioritizing public safety concerns, [new policies and practices were carefully implemented](#), which included limiting misdemeanor jail admissions, launching a jail population review team, expanding remote communication options, instituting mandatory masking, and providing testing.

"Our partnership with the MacArthur Foundation has helped make Milwaukee County strong and safe in a manner that honors the rights and dignity of everyone in our community," said Milwaukee County Sheriff Earnell Lucas. "We look forward to building upon the progress that we have made in safely reducing our pretrial jail population while advancing public health and safety in our community."

In partnership with governmental and community partners, the CJC has outlined four strategies and initiatives over the next two years to invest in a safer, more effective, and more equitable system:

- **Case Processing** increases efficiency and streamlines movement of cases through the criminal justice system;
- **Expanded Data** monitors trends in the criminal justice process, tracks SJC progress, and informs policy with accurate data;
- **Mental Health Diversion** diverts persons with behavioral health needs into community-based support services; and,
- **Racial Equity** convenes system and community partners to measurably reduce disparities through decision point analysis, shared priority-setting, and training.

As the CJC deepens its focus on racial equity and sustaining SJC work to date, the Council will align with County-led efforts to address racialized outcomes, including the disparate harm of justice system involvement on communities of color.

More than five years after its public launch, the Safety and Justice Challenge has grown into a collaborative of 51 jurisdictions in 32 states, modeling and inspiring reforms to create more fair, just, and equitable local justice systems across the country.

"We must confront the devastating impacts of mass incarceration by a system that over-polices and over-incarcerates Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people," said Laurie Garduque, MacArthur's Director of Criminal Justice. "Over the past five years, the Safety and Justice Challenge has safely reduced the ineffective and harmful use of jails, while learning that jail population reduction alone does not undo the racial inequities perpetuated by an unjust system and our nation's history of systemic racism. We are committed to supporting cities and counties



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as they reimagine a definition of safety that is inclusive of all communities and makes meaningful progress towards our goal of ending racial and ethnic disparities in jails.”

“We couldn’t be prouder of the progress made thus far in our use of holistic and restorative alternatives to incarceration – and I’m glad our work is being recognized in the form a continued partnership with the MacArthur Foundation to achieve racial equity and become the healthiest county in Wisconsin,” said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley. “Few circumstances negatively affect the life and health of our residents like unnecessary incarceration. The additional support from the Safety and Justice Challenge will help us center the voices and experiences of those most impacted, strengthen trust, and ensure our work actively responds to the community’s needs.”

Several of the nation's leading criminal justice organizations will continue to provide technical assistance and counsel to the Milwaukee Community Justice Council, Milwaukee County partners, and the other jurisdictions involved in the Safety and Justice Challenge. These include the Center for Court Innovation, Everyday Democracy, Nexus Community Partners, the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York, JFA Institute, the Justice Management Institute, Justice System Partners, the Pretrial Justice Institute, Policy Research, Inc., the Vera Institute of Justice, the W. Haywood Burns Institute, Urban Institute, and Bennett Midland.

More information about the work underway in Milwaukee County can be found on Milwaukee.gov/CJC as well as on 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.



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About the Milwaukee Community Justice Council

Created by Milwaukee County Board resolution in 2007, the Milwaukee Community Justice Council is made up of Milwaukee-area criminal justice agencies, local governments, and residents working collaboratively to ensure a fair, efficient, and effective justice system that enhances public safety and quality of life in our community. Though initially created to enhance coordination and collaboration among criminal justice agencies, local leadership included “community justice” in the CJC name to emphasize the importance of including community and community priorities in its work. The Council is committed to fostering opportunities for diverse perspectives to be heard and establishing collaborative, transparent decision-making around criminal justice policy. The Council is governed by an Executive Committee, comprised of the leadership from participating criminal justice organizations. Milwaukee County Circuit Court Chief Judge Mary Triggiano is the current CJC chair. The Council hosts bi-monthly meetings, which are open to the public. More information on the Council can be found at Milwaukee.gov/CJC.

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