Our Mission

The Chicago Community Bond Fund (“CCBF”) pays bond for people charged with crimes in Cook County, Illinois. Through a revolving fund, CCBF supports individuals whose communities cannot afford to pay the bonds themselves and who have been impacted by structural violence. Inability to pay bond results in higher rates of conviction, longer sentences, loss of housing and jobs, separation of families, and lost custody of children. By paying bond, CCBF restores the presumption of innocence before trial and enables recipients to remain free while fighting their cases. CCBF also engages in public education about the role of bond in the criminal legal system and advocates for the abolition of money bond. CCBF is committed to long-term relationship building and organizing with people most directly impacted by criminalization and policing.
Our First Year

The Chicago Community Bond Fund posted bond for the first time on December 3, 2015. A $5,000 bond freed R.W. after a month and a half of incarceration. Since then, CCBF has posted $303,295 in bonds, freeing a total of 45 people from Cook County Jail or home confinement resulting from electronic monitoring. CCBF raised $262,085 of the money posted, and an additional $41,210 was contributed by family members and other supporters of people bonded out. Six of these cases have been resolved, returning $16,700 to our revolving fund. No bonds have been lost due to forfeiture.

CCBF has organized several educational events and fundraisers in support of our mission to abolish monetary bond and end pretrial detention. CCBF members have presented at various public interest panels and conferences, as well as in college classrooms. Most recently, CCBF organized a panel discussion on risk and dangerousness, exploring how determinations of incarceration are made in an unequal society. CCBF also worked with attorneys who recently filed constitutional challenge to the use of money bond in Cook County. We identified and referred a named plaintiff for the class action lawsuit, which hopes to declare pretrial detention based on inability to pay bond unconstitutional. We then posted bond for that plaintiff, a young man who spent 10 months in jail because he could not post $1,000.

CCBF is also part of a forming coalition of community-based and policy organizations working to end the use of monetary bond. Our volunteers continue to work with people we have bonded out to tell their stories and shift public perception of both people accused of crimes and the impact of pretrial detention. CCBF members and people the group has posted bond for have been interviewed by the Chicago Reporter, the New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, Chicago Tonight, ABC7, the Chicago Reader, and other media outlets. In November of 2016, people bonded out by CCBF participated in a public hearing about the impact of pretrial detention hosted by the Cook County Board.
**Structure**

The Chicago Community Bond Fund operates as a consensus-based collective with four committees: the bond squad, which follows through with intakes and posts bond; post-bond support, which provides individualized support for people when they get out; fundraising; and education and advocacy. At least one representative from each committee participates in the operations or “core” working group to ensure information sharing and collaboration across committees. CCBF holds a general organizational meeting on the second Sunday of every month. CCBF’s 15 members support a wider network of more than 50 volunteers. With the exception of a 10 week, $4,200 fellowship stipend to fund organizational capacity-building, CCBF remains an all-volunteer effort. CCBF also received a $5,000 grant from Crossroads Fund to support our advocacy and community education work.
Criteria

CCBF strives to eliminate the use of monetary bond in Cook County entirely, but we are currently unable to assist everyone who needs help paying bond. CCBF uses a variety of factors to determine whether to pay bond for someone who applies for our assistance.

The following interactive factors guide CCBF’s evaluations of request for assistance with help paying bond:

1. Inability to pay bond required, including lack of access to family or community resources;
2. Amount of bond to be paid;
3. Existing support system, such as a family member or case manager who has committed to providing assistance making court dates and/or other forms of support;
4. Risk of victimization in the jail, including but not limited to: gender identity and expression (namely transgender, gender non-conforming or LGBQI people), people with disabilities, and youth or elder status;
5. Special health needs such as pregnancy, chronic medical conditions, or ongoing mental health treatment;
6. Dependents or other family members who may be harmed by applicant’s detention, including risk of custody loss or Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) involvement;
7. Immigration status and potential immigration consequences of a criminal conviction;
8. Referral through or connection to established partner organization;
9. Anticipated impact of detention on applicant’s employment, housing, educational attainment, and/or custodial rights;
10. Position in relation to structural violence, community disinvestment, systemic racism, survival, and resistance; and
11. Willingness to assist with raising money to cover any anticipated court costs, fines, or fees that will not be refunded to the bond fund.
Our Criteria Reviewed

The 45 people CCBF posted bond for in the last year all fall squarely within the criteria that we established as our priorities. The race, ethnicity, and gender demographics of people we posted bond for roughly approximate both the demographics of people who requested CCBF’s assistance and of people incarcerated in Cook County Jail. Both Black people and women are slightly overrepresented among people we bonded out, which is expected given the criteria’s emphasis on assisting communities facing systematic disinvestment and heightened criminalization, and individuals with unique challenges resulting from incarceration. Two of the women we posted bond for, Naomi and Morgan, were pregnant and risked giving birth while locked up, and nearly all were primary caregivers to children.

Of the 45 people bonded out, 11 (24%) were arrested during protests or while engaged in other political action. This emphasis on supporting people engaged in activism, primarily Black Lives Matter protesters, directly advances our mission of supporting movements seeking systemic change in Chicago.

As is evident through the stories included later in this report, many of the people we posted bond for met several of the criteria for prioritization, including risk of losing jobs, housing, benefits, or custody of their children.
Types of Cases

Between November 20, 2015 and November 6, 2016, CCBF received requests for help paying bond for 238 individuals incarcerated in Cook County Jail or on house arrest. Often, requests for assistance were denied because of the high amount of bond (such as bonds requiring more than $5,000 of CCBF’s funds) or because too many factors risked the return of the bond money. From March to June of 2016, CCBF accepted general intakes that came from individuals as well as organizations. During this period, CCBF used the majority of the organization’s available funds. Because felony cases often take one to four years to resolve, the majority of bonds posted by CCBF this year will not return for quite some time. In June 2016, CCBF closed general intakes and began to focus on referrals from partner organizations in the legal aid and social service sectors, including Lawndale Christian Legal Center, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, Thresholds, and Trilogy, as well as referrals from assistant public defenders. In November 2016, CCBF launched a fundraising campaign to replenish our general revolving bond fund.

Protests

Since its founding, Chicago Community Bond Fund has remained committed to supporting grassroots movements, including the Movement for Black Lives. CCBF has provided bond support for seven protest actions that took place throughout Chicago. Bond money was raised for BYP 100’s shutdown of the International Association of Chiefs of Police conference; demonstrations in response to the murder of Laquan McDonald by Chicago Police; an art blockade by Lifted Voices; a mass action that shut down Donald Trump’s planned campaign rally at the University of Illinois-Chicago; demonstrations demanding justice for Pierre Loury, a 16 year old boy killed by Chicago Police; Chicago May Day marchers; and a mass action at Taste of Chicago following the police murders of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile.

CCBF posted bond for eleven protesters in total. Their bonds ranged from $200 to $35,000, and the average bond CCBF paid for a protester was $7,882. Your support has also ensured that every demonstrator arrested in Chicago over the last year has been released within 36 hours of having their bond set, even when the bonds were very high.
Demographics

Age

CCBF received requests for help paying bond for people between the ages of 17 and 66, with an average age of 32. The 45 people we posted bond for were between the ages of 18 and 56. The average age of someone CCBF posted bond for was 29 years old.

Bonds Posted and Bonds Requested

Bonds Requested by Gender

- Men 83.2%
- Unavailable 9.2%
- Women 7.1%
- Non-binary 0.4%

Bonds Posted By Gender

- Men 80%
- Women 17.8%
- Non-binary 2.2%
People Freed

Naomi

In December 2015, CCBF joined with Love & Protect, Moms United Against Violence & Incarceration, and 15 other organizations to free Naomi Freeman, a pregnant 23-year-old mother of two. Naomi had already spent six months in Cook County Jail. Determined to get her back to her family and out of jail before giving birth, we raised her $35,000 bond in less than a week.

Naomi is charged with first-degree murder because she chose to survive an attack by an abusive partner. Had Naomi not acted in self-defense, it is likely that she would be dead. Instead, Naomi survived and is being punished for saving her own life.

In total, 345 people donated to Naomi’s freedom in amounts ranging from $3 to $1,000. More than $13,000 was raised in online donations to supplement a $26,000 grant from the Women’s Justice Fund housed at Crossroads Fund. The WJF was established in the 1990s specifically to post bond for domestic violence survivors criminalized for actions taken in self-defense. Partially as a result of this successful campaign to #FreeNaomiFreeman, the WJF has now been transferred to the Chicago Community Bond Fund (CCBF), where it will remain available as a revolving fund designated to serve women charged with crimes related to self-defense.

Leon

On April 17, 2016, CCBF posted Leon’s $2,500 bond. Leon was 46 years old and had been working with Growing Home Inc., an urban farm and job training program. He was arrested for allegedly stealing toiletries from a convenience store. Unable to pay his own bond, Leon was poised to spend weeks (if not months) in CCJ. Among other consequences, that would have kept Leon from completing Growing Home’s job training program and from benefitting from the support of his case managers there.

Bonding Leon out not only brought him freedom, but also allowed him to graduate from Growing Home. Two months after we posted Leon’s bond, he secured full-time employment at a restaurant. Leon’s case was dismissed one month after CCBF posted his bond, and the funds returned to CCBF so we could bond out additional people.
Lavette

On May 16, 2016, CCBF posted $9,500 to free Lavette from Cook County Jail after 14 months behind bars. CCBF contributed $7,500 to supplement the $2,000 that her friends and family pooled together to support her release.

Lavette is a 46-year-old mother of two children, 6 and 15 year old. She was charged with aggravated domestic battery after allegedly getting into an altercation with her former mother-in-law while going through a divorce. Despite the fact that Lavette had never been arrested before and was the primary caregiver for her children, she was initially given a $250,000 bond that she was unable to pay. During Lavette’s long pre-trial incarceration, she was torn apart from her children and lost her job and her ability to financially support her family.

Unfortunately, even after we posted her bond, Lavette was required to wear an electronic ankle monitor that severely restricted her movement. She had to request permission from the Cook County Sheriff every time she needed to go to court or the grocery store or even to take her children to school. In October 2016, Lavette pleaded guilty to an amended charge of aggravated assault in exchange for time served. She has since shared her story on Chicago Tonight and with other news outlets as part of the campaign against money bond and pretrial detention.

Maurice

On August 29, 2016, prosecutors dismissed the robbery charges against Maurice, a 20 year old Black resident of West Humboldt Park. Thanks to a $3,500 bond we posted on May 3, 2016, Maurice was free and able to fight his case for 4.5 months. Before CCBF posted his bond, Maurice spent 11 months incarcerated in Cook County Jail.

One of the reasons CCBF posted bond for Maurice was the negative impact that pretrial incarceration had on his health. The jail greatly exacerbated Maurice’s pre-existing breathing condition caused by MRSA, which has left one of his lungs functioning at half capacity. In the summer months, Maurice would wake up in his stuffy cell gasping for air. By posting Maurice’s bond, CCBF prevented him from spending an additional 140 days in Cook County Jail.
Morgan

On June 13, 2016 CCBF posted a $10,000 bond to free 24 year-old Morgan from Cook County Jail. Morgan was 37 weeks pregnant and had been in CCJ for three and a half months. Morgan was charged with child endangerment following the accidental death of her 14-month-old son. Grieving and charged with responsibility for her own profound loss, Morgan was locked away from her family and community during the worst possible time.

If she had given birth while incarcerated, Morgan would have had only 48 hours with her newborn girl before being forced to turn her over to a relative or the state. That immediate separation would have prevented mother-child bonding during a crucial period of attachment. Morgan would have then faced the impossible choice between accepting a plea and the corresponding lifelong criminal conviction, or remaining in jail awaiting trial for the first two years of her daughter’s life. Morgan gave birth, in freedom, to a beautiful baby

Shimron

On April 11, 2016, Chicago Police fatally shot 16-year-old Pierre Loury in the back outside his home in North Lawndale. In response to Pierre’s murder, Black Lives Matter Chicago organized a vigil and protest march. After they marched through Lawndale lifting up Pierre’s name for several hours, Chicago Police brutally attacked the demonstrators. Shimron was one of two people taken into custody during the protest.

Shimron had not planned on protesting that day; he was in Lawndale to work on his music when he heard the march. Shimron and his friends decided to join the march, and mere moments later, Shimron found himself arrested for the first time in his life. With a bond set at $30,000, Shimron’s job, housing, and overall stable life were jeopardized. CCBF posted his $3,000 bond the same day it was set, helping minimize any harms from his unjust arrest. Shimron is currently fighting his case from a position of freedom and continuing to make new music.
Maria & Destiny

Maria and her 19-year-old daughter Destiny were arrested on April 28, 2016 and charged with aggravated battery against a police officer just days after Maria’s son and Destiny’s brother Gino was shot and killed in North Lawndale. Maria’s bond was set at $50,000 and Destiny’s was set at $25,000, as they grieved for Gino from Cook County Jail. The next day, they were both released on electronic monitoring. Due to Cook County Sheriff regulations that two people cannot be on house arrest at the same address, Maria was dropped off at her sister’s house in one neighborhood and Destiny was dropped off at her mother’s in a different one.

Over the next two weeks, Maria and Destiny were denied every request for movement they and their attorney made. Maria and Destiny both worked as cleaners through a temp agency. Destiny was also a senior in high school. Despite letters and paperwork from Maria’s employers and Destiny’s school, the only movement they received was to attend Gino’s wake and funeral—which had already been rescheduled once because of their arrests. Because their requests for movement to go to work were repeatedly denied, Maria and Destiny were in danger of losing their apartment due to their inability to support themselves while on house arrest.

Recognizing the urgency of their situation, CCBF posted $7,500 in bond to free them from electronic monitoring on May 16th. Maria and Destiny were both able to return to work, and Destiny was able to finish school. Most importantly, they are both able to fight their charges without the social isolation and financial burden of house arrest. CCBF is committed to challenging the use of electronic monitoring as a viable alternative to complete release pending trial. What happened to Maria and Destiny illustrates that, like jail, house arrest has a profoundly disruptive impact on employment, education, and community healing.

Zachary

On October 20, 2016, CCBF posted $1,000 to free Zach from Cook County Jail after he spent more than 10 months in jail because he could not afford to post this bond himself. Zach is a 25-year-old plaintiff in the recently-filed class action lawsuit against Cook County Circuit Court judges and Sheriff Thomas Dart that argues that the defendants are violating the United States and Illinois constitutions, as well as the Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003, by setting bonds in amounts that these release-eligible arrestees are unable to afford and incarcerating them as they await trial.
Devoureaux

CCBF posted $3,000 to free Devoureaux from Cook County Jail on June 11, 2016. Devoureaux is a 24 year-old well-known footwork artist living on Chicago’s West Side. He was arrested in April and charged with aggravated battery to a police officer. As is often the case when someone is charged with aggravated battery, it was, in fact, Devoureaux who was injured during the arrest. Simply because he could not pay his bond, Devoureaux had to spend over 1.5 months in Cook County Jail.

While Devoureaux was in jail, his uncle who helped raise him, passed away unexpectedly. With CCBF’s help, Devoureaux was freed two days before his uncle’s memorial service and able to serve as a pallbearer. It was very important for Devoureaux to be there to say goodbye and honor his close relationship with his uncle.

Jail can be a particularly dangerous place for people with chronic illnesses. While in jail, the unhealthy food made Devoureaux’s pre-existing kidney condition worse, and he began urinating blood. Devoureaux’s health has greatly improved now that he is able to eat nutritiously again. He is also able to continue earning a living performing, and to volunteer at schools and community anti-violence events.

Diomar

Diomar is a 19 year old Chicagoan who lives in the Back of The Yards neighborhood. He was arrested in March and charged with fleeing a police officer. Due solely to his inability to pay $5,000 in bond, Diomar spent a month in Cook County Jail. On April 9, 2016, CCBF posted bond to free Diomar from CCJ.

Prior to his arrest, Diomar was working full-time as a landscaper and had recently taken on a second part-time job as a dishwasher. He lived with his fiancee who was 4 months pregnant at the time. While Diomar was incarcerated, his fiancee had been struggling to pay their rent and medical bills without his income, and was in danger of losing her housing.

Within three days of his release on bond, Diomar was rehired at both his jobs. As a result, he and his fiancee were able to keep their housing. In September, Diomar’s fiancee gave birth to their baby boy. Diomar is extremely excited to be a new father. He said this about CCBF’s support: “I really appreciate you guys helping me out. It really means a lot. Now I know I can take care of my child and fiancee. You guys gave me my freedom back. If it wasn't for you guys, I would still be in Cook County Jail as we speak.”
Conclusion

Ending the use of money bond in Illinois and dramatically decreasing pretrial detention are winnable fights. CCBF organizers remain committed to working our organization out of existence, hopeful that a bond fund will not be necessary because monetary bond will no longer exist. With this goal in mind, CCBF understands that it is not enough to post bond for low-income individuals inside Cook County Jail, but rather to organize within a solidarity framework as part of the broader movement against criminalization and mass incarceration.