



June 30, 2019

Judge Robbin J. Stuckert  
DeKalb County Courthouse  
133 W. State Street  
Sycamore, IL 60178

RE: Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Pretrial Practices

Dear Honorable Judge Robbin J. Stuckert,

I write to you as a person who has been directly impacted by pretrial incarceration and unaffordable money bond. I also spoke to the Commission during the Chicago listening session on June 17, 2019. I spent 52 days in Cook County Jail because I couldn't afford my \$7,500 bond, an amount that was totally unaffordable for my family. Without the help of the Chicago Community Bond Fund, I may have been in jail for more than a year while fighting my case. The time I spent in jail and separated from my family caused many hardships that could have been avoided if my bond were affordable. After my bond was paid, I was able to help my wife and family move after the property we lived in was foreclosed on. I was able to keep working to support my family, and I was able to receive proper medical care for my respiratory asthma condition.

When you read my words, you're not just reading my story. You're reading the story of thousands of other people who have been locked up simply because they couldn't afford their money bonds. I'm just a representation of the folks that don't have a voice in this conversation. Being able to fight my case from the outside was much better because the judge, the State's Attorney, and others looked at me differently. Most importantly, I was able to dress appropriately for my court dates, and I was able to fight my case with less pressure. If my bond hadn't been paid, I would have probably accepted a plea deal because I couldn't bear to be locked up any longer.

There are a lot of people that can't afford to get out of jail because of their financial circumstances, even if the bond amount is low. People go back and forth from jail to court for months—sometimes years—because they can't afford to pay a money bond. Wealthy people are able to bond out and fight their cases on the outside because they have money. The current

system is unbalanced. Nobody should be locked up because they can't afford to pay their money bond.

Money bond isn't keeping our communities safe. It's simply allowing those with money to have freedom while those that don't are locked up. Money bond should be eradicated. People shouldn't have to suffer because they do not have money. Everyone should be able to fight their case from a place of freedom, like I was.

We need to stop pushing this problem under the rug. We need to stop talking about this problem and start doing something about it. This commission has the power to fix this problem and change the lives of thousands of people. We must stop locking people up because of their financial situations.

Sincerely,

Flonard Wrencher  
Volunteer