



# CHICAGO COMMUNITY BOND FUND

## Fact Sheet Responding to the *Chicago Tribune's* False Narrative About Our Work

In an article released on April 29, 2020, the *Chicago Tribune* attacked Chicago Community Bond Fund (CCBF) for paying bond for people who cannot afford it themselves. As much as this is an attack on pretrial freedom, it is also a defense of a two-tiered justice system: one that grants advantages to the wealthy while punishing other people for their poverty. This article reinforces racialized fearmongering about people accused of crimes and is riddled with factual errors about the impact of CCBF's work. Below are some facts to help correct the record.

### Total Bonds Paid By CCBF

- Since November 2015, CCBF has paid \$1,841,445 in bond to free 333 people from Cook County Jail or house arrest with electronic monitoring.

### Impact of Paying Bond

- CCBF does not judge people by their relationship to the criminal legal system. The real impact of helping free people from Cook County Jail is best understood through the stories of people we've paid bond for and their communities. Below are some statistics focusing on how CCBF's act of paying bond to free 167 people in the last 18 months has impacted them and their loved ones:
  - 263 children were reunited with a parent.
  - 71 adults were reunited with a caretaker.
  - 26 students were able to return to school.
  - 52 people receiving insufficient medical care were able to get treatment in their community.
  - 42 people were able to get mental health care in their community.
  - 83 people were able to return to work.
  - 22 people who were at risk of losing their housing were able to return home.

### How Do People Do While Out on Bond?

- CCBF has paid bond for 333 people in the last four years, and only 31 of those people have been rearrested. 91% of the people CCBF has paid bond completed their case without being rearrested.
- 92.5% of people CCBF has paid bond for made it back to all of their court dates without any issue.

### Case Resolutions

- Of the 333 people CCBF has paid bond for, 191 have had their cases resolve.
- Thirty-eight (38) of these people were convicted and were not sentenced to additional prison or jail time. In total, CCBF saved these individuals 36,327 days they would have otherwise spent incarcerated, an average of 273 days per person.
- 23% of these individuals (43 people) were not convicted of anything at all, and 63% of them had their charges reduced (22% had their charges reduced from a felony to a misdemeanor). Of the 43 people who were not convicted of anything, their cases did not resolve for a total of 10,247 days (238 days per person, on average) after CCBF posted their bonds, meaning that those people might have spent a combined 28 additional years in the jail pretrial, just for their charges to be dismissed or be found not guilty.
- **People who CCBF bonded out were more likely to be acquitted or have their charges dismissed than be rearrested while on bond.** Of the 191 people whose cases have resolved, 43 people were not convicted of any crime at all, while only 31 were rearrested for a new charge while on bond.
- Of the 191 people whose cases have resolved, 37 were originally facing Class X charges; in the end, only three of those 37 people were eventually convicted of a Class X crime and three were not convicted of anything at all. Of the 34 people who were convicted of some offense, 17 (50%) did not return to jail or prison at all and were sentenced to either probation, conditional discharge on a misdemeanor, or time served.

### The cases the *Chicago Tribune* did include are riddled with errors.

- The data used by the *Chicago Tribune* paints an incomplete picture of the work done by Chicago Community Bond Fund. The *Tribune* focused on only some months and selected people based on their charges and bond amounts.
- In an attempt to inflate failure rates, the reporters used no recognizable definition of pretrial success or failure. Instead, they assembled a collection of people they attempt to frame as dangerous by combining different cases, past history, and future cases that began after the cases in which we paid bond ended.
  - They counted as failures cases in which warrants were issued before we paid bond, allegations of bond violations that were later dismissed, and at least one violation of post-conviction probation, which obviously has nothing to do with bond.
- Simply noting that someone missed a court date does not tell a complete story; people miss court for many circumstances beyond their control. CCBF worked with at least one of the individuals examined in the article to support their return to court after they realized they missed a date. Additionally, people miss court for all kinds of valid reasons, including lack of childcare or transportation, or because they made the impossible choice to go to work instead of taking the entire day off to attend a 30 second court date.
- The *Chicago Tribune* also focuses on how several people were rearrested while out on bond and treats arrests as though they are convictions, ignoring that many of these cases and associated violations will ultimately be dismissed.