



# CHICAGO COMMUNITY BOND FUND

June 17, 2020

Ms. Kimberly Foxx  
Cook County State's Attorney  
69 West Washington Street  
Chicago, IL 60602  
*Sent via email to [statesattorney@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:statesattorney@cookcountyil.gov)*

## **Re: Requesting Steps be Taken to Maintain Dramatically Lower Number of People in Cook County Jail in Ongoing Response to COVID-19**

Dear State's Attorney Foxx:

Chicago Community Bond Fund has been working to end money bond and reform Illinois pretrial legal system since 2015. In early March, we began working to decarcerate Cook County Jail in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to stem the inevitable spread of the virus and save lives. We have worked with organizations across the county to pressure the Cook County Sheriff's Office, Chief Judge, and your own office to this end. Over the last several months, you have received thousands of calls from people across Cook County with demands that your office do more to save the lives of those incarcerated in the jail and coming into contact with our criminal legal system.

The reduction in the number of people incarcerated in the jail that occurred in March and April was life-changing for those released or never admitted, however, far too many lives remain at risk. **In addition, the number of people in jail today is almost 500 people higher than at its lowest point in May.** There is no way for the more than 4,500 people currently in Cook County Jail to practice effective social distancing and prevent the spread of COVID-19. This is why, in April, we began circulating a petition calling on your office to take further actions to suppress admissions to the jail and facilitate pretrial release in this unprecedented moment. At that time, more than 300 people incarcerated in the jail had tested positive for COVID-19 and four people had died. Another three people lost their lives as we gathered these signatures.

While we applaud the work done by your office and other county officials to reduce the number of people in the jail, hundreds of people continue to be admitted each week, bringing with them the possibility of COVID-19's spread. Although these individuals might be quarantined at intake, they are still exposed to the guards who will inevitably bring the virus inside the jail.

While the rate of infection at the jail has dropped since its earlier high point, the novel coronavirus remains a looming threat that is made significantly worse by increased admissions

to the jail during summer months. **The policy changes requested below are essential to keeping the number of people in jail as low as possible and preventing a second outbreak of the virus and further deaths within the jail.**

The 2,577 individual signatories on this petition join the thousands of people represented by the more than 100 organizations who signed onto [an open letter](#) submitted to county officials in March. That letter correctly forecasted the “hot spot” that the jail would become if decarceration efforts were not taken. **We encourage you to implement these policies now to keep the number of people inside Cook County Jail as low as possible throughout the summer and fall:**

1. Decline to file new charges in cases that do not involve danger to a specific person;
2. Agree to release most people seeking bond reviews from custody without payment of money;
3. Immediately dismiss all pending misdemeanors and class 4 felony cases not involving danger to a specific person, starting with cases in which people are in jail; and
4. Cease filing violations of probation and violations of bail bonds for technical violations or reasons not involving danger to a specific person.

Thank you for considering these measures as outlined above and supported by the attached list of constituents. We would like to schedule a time to speak with your office by phone to learn about how you are currently handling these issues and your specific plans to prevent increased jail admissions this summer. Please contact me by email at [sharlyn@chicagobond.org](mailto:sharlyn@chicagobond.org) or by phone at 773-946-8535 to schedule a time to discuss these proposals further.

Sincerely,



Sharlyn Grace

Executive Director

Chicago Community Bond Fund

Cc: Joseph Magats via [joseph.magats@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:joseph.magats@cookcountyil.gov)  
Marny Zimmer via [marny.zimmer@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:marny.zimmer@cookcountyil.gov)  
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