



March 16, 2018

Judge John J. Russo  
Courtroom 16-D  
Cuyahoga County Justice Center  
1200 Ontario Street  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Dear Judge Russo, Cuyahoga County and municipal court judges, and local officials:

For over a year, a Cuyahoga County bail task force comprised of former and present members of the judiciary, legal academics, and attorneys, have studied Cuyahoga County's pretrial criminal justice system and bail system to address unfair bail practices and look for areas of improvement. The task force recently released its reform recommendations and we urge you to begin their implementation without delay.

The task force recommendations are eminently reasonable. They represent some of the leading national best practices and procedures around bail that facilitate release and reduce unconstitutional wealth based detention. These include: limited use of bond schedules, individualized bail determinations with a right to counsel, bail hearings within 48 hours of arrest, a presumption of personal recognizance release on certain offenses, limited use of financial bonds, and centralized booking and pretrial services. Similar reforms in New Jersey have resulted in a 20% reduction in the statewide jail population during the first year of implementation.

We encourage the judges of Cuyahoga County to implement the reforms and monitor the results throughout the coming year. This is the first step toward real and sustainable change.

You will find enclosed with this letter over 500 signed petitions from concerned Cuyahoga County residents supporting county-wide bail reform.

Sincerely,

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Enclosure

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