



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM ADVISORY COMMISSION

November 24, 2020

Mr. Chuck Huckelberry
County Administrator
Pima County
130 W. Congress, 10th Floor
Tucson, Arizona 85701

Re: **Public Defense Services Community Bond Program**

Dear Mr. Huckelberry:

The undersigned make up the Pima County Criminal Justice Reform Advisory Commission (CJRAC) that you created to offer advice and recommendations concerning attainable criminal justice reform to improve the justice system in our community. As you know, the CJRAC is made up predominantly of former members of the criminal justice community with considerable experience in their past roles.

Our justice reform recommendations have come in two forms: those requiring legislative change and those that may be effected locally without legislative change. In this letter, we express our unqualified support for one of the latter: the Community Bond Program. We see it as almost a preliminary step toward a more significant change - the elimination of cash bail.

Abolishing cash bail, one of our recommended legislative changes, is a concept that has been put into practice in several states, but the CJRAC recognizes that it constitutes a considerable, albeit not insurmountable, change for Arizona. While bail reform will require buy-in from various stakeholders, especially judges and prosecutors, we know that current bail/bond systems have the greatest negative impact on the poor and on persons of color. The collateral impacts on persons with limited resources being held on bail prior to trial are colossal and well-documented in research. They include loss of jobs, separation of families and loss of homes. Making pretrial decisions based on reasonable assessments can ensure community safety but also avoid the unnecessary incarceration for low-income people and persons of color accused of low-level crimes.

The difficulty of abolishing the cash bail system is daunting and may not be achievable in the immediate future. Accordingly, and as a first step in that direction, we highly recommend the creation of a Community Bond Program.

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This concept, perhaps the most well-received of the reforms CJRAC considered, was eloquently described in the August 2020 whitepaper authored by Public Defense Services Director Dean Brault and entitled *Safely Reducing the Jail Population Using Pre-Trial Risk Assessments and a Community Bond Program*. Additionally, Mr. Brault provided the CJRAC with presentations on the project and has been available to answer our questions about the proposed Bond Program.

The members thank you for respecting the contributions you believe we can make to improving justice in Pima County and we thank you as well for your consideration of this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Judge Richard Fields (retired, Presiding Judge Criminal Bench);
Lori Lefferts, Pima County Public Defense Services (retired);
Jim Walsh, former Pinal County Attorney;
Kent Batty, Pima County Superior Court Administrator (retired), current Interim Justice Court Administrator;
Gerald Kicanas, Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Tucson;
David Neri, Tucson Police Department - Counter Narcotics Agency, Captain, retired;
Chuck Pyle, federal magistrate, retired; and
Patricia Alvarez Hurley, Assistant Pima County Administrator for Justice and Law Enforcement, retired

c: Wendy Petersen, Assistant County Administrator for Justice and Law Enforcement
Dean Brault, Director, Public Defense Services