

To: Sheriff Dan Walsh, Champaign County Sheriff's Office

From: Chief of Police Patrick J Connolly, Urbana Police Department
Chief of Police Anthony Cobb, Champaign Police Department
Chief of Police Jeffrey T Christensen, University of Illinois Police Department
Chief of Police Paul Farber, Rantoul Police Department
Chief of Police William Colbrook, Parkland College Police Department
Chief of Police Michael Metzler, Mahomet Police Department

Re: Letter of Commitment - MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge

Commitment of Law Enforcement Agencies in Champaign County

We are writing to express our strong support for Champaign County's request for the funds needed to complete a system plan designed to avoid unnecessary jail confinement. In our county, there is an acute lack of appropriate and safe alternatives to jail for many of those we deal with on the street. The system plan developed with the foundation's assistance will not only help remedy this problem but will help other jurisdictions that can learn from the example of systemic change we hope to provide.

We, along with the Sheriff's Office, represent 99% of the police officers in the County. For many years all of our agencies have worked closely with the Sheriff's Office and each other, both at the street level and at the upper management level. The Sheriff and the four chiefs of these larger agencies meet several times a month to work cooperatively on matters of joint and individual concern, and the Chief Deputy Sheriff and deputy chiefs also meet monthly to work collaboratively. We and the Sheriff all joined a combined records management system, in short, we work closely and well together. We will continue to do so as we tackle, during the systemic planning process, questions about how to reduce jail confinement in Champaign County through changes in current law enforcement practices.

We also recognize that our law enforcement agencies will need to work with other groups to achieve the aims of the planning grant. We have a long history of successful interagency and community partnerships. For example, our agencies work regularly with the Community Coalition, a wide-ranging network of organizations and stakeholders, to improve the lives of our youth and promote effective law enforcement and positive police-community relations.

We not only support this grant application but also are also deeply committed to playing a key role in the systemic planning. As part of the Planning Team's Law Enforcement Practices Subcommittee, we will conduct a review of our own policies and practices to identify how they can be improved to limit the number of people taken to jail and reduce the racial and socioeconomic disparity in the jail's population. We will explore such matters as the increased use of street issued NTAs, station adjustments, diversion from the criminal justice system of those with significant addiction or mental health problems, racial disparity in police arrests, and CIT training. We will then take steps, including training, to ensure that changes in policies and procedures are actually implemented at the street level. One of us will serve on the Planning Team, and all of us will provide any arrest, NTA, demographic, and other data needed to create a system plan marked by its excellence.

Julia R. Rietz
State's Attorney



Courthouse
101 East Main Street
P. O. Box 785
Urbana, Illinois 61801
Phone (217) 384-3733
Fax (217) 384-3816
email: statesatty@co.champaign.il.us

**Office of
State's Attorney
Champaign County, Illinois**

March 27, 2015

This letter serves as a letter of commitment from the Champaign County State's Attorney's Office to Champaign County's application for participation in the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge. As State's Attorney, I am pleased to lend my support for this collaborative effort to ensure the effective and appropriate use of Champaign County's jail. Champaign County has a longstanding tradition of innovative, cooperative problem solving when it comes to public safety concerns. We work well together across law enforcement jurisdictions, between local governments, and within the court system. Our collaborative efforts have led to the creation of a Youth Assessment Center to provide diversion options for juveniles across the county, a Children's Advocacy Center to provide a safe and appropriate place for child sexual abuse victims to be interviewed and receive services, an integrated criminal justice technology system to provide access to data and information across and between departments and agencies, and to numerous task forces and multiagency initiatives to ensure that citizens across Champaign County receive consistent access to resources. This effort to participate in the Safety and Justice Challenge fits seamlessly into our efforts to seek innovative and lasting solutions to current issues.

My commitment to this endeavor will be manifested in many ways. Several years ago, the State's Attorney's Office, under my directive, spearheaded the establishment of restorative justice programs in the county's juvenile justice system. I believe I am the logical person to help lead the effort to now explore importing restorative justice into our criminal justice system, and I will work with a subcommittee of the Planning Team on this part of our system plan.

In addition, I worked with local judges and the probation department to establish a "Second Chance Court" in 2012. This court provides a way for individuals charged with nonviolent felonies to avoid the negative consequences of having a felony on their record. As part of the system planning process, I will build on our experience and work with others, aided by the technical assistance we will be receiving under this grant, to determine how other diversion or deferred-adjudication programs might be specifically targeted to avoid jail confinement.

As State's Attorney for three terms, I am also aware of, and concerned about, the issues presented by racial and economic disparities in our jail and criminal justice system. Because these issues are not unique to Champaign County, the MacArthur Foundation's grant will provide Champaign County with a valuable opportunity to combine our resources with the Foundation's to pull all key stakeholders and community representatives together to tackle this disparity problem most effectively. The State's Attorney's Office is committed to participate in the planning and data sharing needed to realize this goal and to meet the others goals of the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge, goals that I strongly share.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Julia R. Rietz".


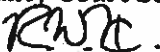
Julia R. Rietz
Champaign County State's Attorney

Thomas J. Difanis
CIRCUIT JUDGE
COURTHOUSE
101 East Main Street
URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801-2772

SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

TELEPHONE 384-3704
AREA CODE 217

TO: MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge Grant Review

FROM: The Honorable Thomas J. Difanis, Presiding Judge
Randy Rosenbaum, Champaign County Public Defender 
Joe Gordon, Director, Champaign County Court Services
Roger Holland, Court Administrator 

RE: Letter of Commitment – MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge

DATE: March 24, 2015

The criminal justice system in Champaign County is at a crossroads. Facing significant budgetary constraints and a lack of community resources for addressing the needs of mentally ill and addicted individuals, the justice system must adapt. With the cooperation of the key stakeholders in the Criminal Justice Executive Council and many others in the County, the Champaign County Courts seek the assistance of the MacArthur Foundation in embarking on measures targeting individuals in both pre- and post-trial phases of the system.

In the pre-trial phase, the Court will authorize the Sheriff to implement, prior to incarceration, a risk assessment instrument to evaluate the need to confine arrested individuals. The Courts are also working with the relevant stakeholders to develop a Community Resource Center where individuals needing mental health treatment, detoxification services or respite care can be cared for. As many of these individuals have frequent interactions with law enforcement, a Community Resource Center would enable many of them to receive the services they need while being diverted from involvement in the criminal justice system. The goal of these efforts is simple: to ensure that only those individuals who require incarceration are being incarcerated in Champaign County.

The planning grant will also enable the Courts to plan other ways to curb jail confinement. Examples include (1) the adoption of "holistic defense" as the model of defense advocacy in the County; (2) working with University of Illinois Law Professor Kenworthy Bilz to identify potential ways to limit confinement through improvements in the probation-revocation process; and (3) expanded sentencing options for judges.

In the post-trial phase, the Court will continue to include two representatives – the Director of Court Services and a representative of the judges – on the Reentry Council to address the housing, education, employment, training and other needs of individuals returning to the community after incarceration.

The best way that Champaign County can ensure that these efforts are successful and cost-effective is to collect, analyze and share Court-related data. The collection of the data will be handled by the County's IT Department and the Court's IT staff. The Presiding Judge, Public Defender, the Director of Court Services and the Court Administrator will serve on the Planning Team to provide input and analysis.

Given the financial limitations at the state and local level, and the needs of those with mental health and/or substance abuse issues, it is imperative that the stakeholders in the Champaign County justice system remain committed to using incarceration in only those circumstances where public safety so requires. The funds provided by a MacArthur Foundation grant would allow the Courts to plan and analyze data to further this goal. We are resolved to working together with our colleagues to achieve it.



CHAMPAIGN COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH BOARD

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BOARD FOR CARE AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH A DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

March 26, 2015

Dan Walsh, Sheriff of Champaign County

The purpose of this letter is to support your application to the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge Grant, and to commit that the Champaign County Mental Health Board will partner with you to plan, fund and deliver services at the Restorative Justice and Community Resource Center.

The Champaign County Mental Health Board is the local behavioral health authority in our community, and as such we share your concerns about people with serious and persistent mental illness and/or substance use disorders who are incarcerated as the default behavioral health treatment option in our community. In response to your input and our ongoing collaboration, our Board has identified behavioral health services and supports for adults who manifest a criminal justice and behavioral health interface as a primary funding priority. This means we will work in collaboration with you and other community stakeholders including the Champaign County Community Coalition to develop a Restorative Justice and Community Resource Center, and commit new resources and redirection of effort to better serve the population of interest.

To illustrate this commitment, we have worked collaboratively with you to plan for a consultation with Mr. Leon Evans, President/CEO of the Center for Health Care Services, San Antonio, Texas (Bexar County). Mr. Evans will be in Champaign County April 22-25, 2015 to provide information about their successful model of jail diversion programming and to consult with us about how we can reconfigure our resources to better serve the population of interest.

Like you, we are also interested in addressing the problems associated with the racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system in Champaign County. Heretofore we have focused our efforts on the juvenile justice system and the disproportionately high numbers of youth of color who are involved. We are strongly committed to moving behavioral health service providers that receive our funding toward improving their cultural and linguistic competence and thereby improve efficacy and positive outcomes for underserved populations. To this end, we have hired a Cultural and Linguistic Competence Coordinator who is responsible for training and monitoring improvement in this critical area. Any contracts issued pertaining to the Restorative Justice and Community Resource Center will include the cultural and linguistic competence component.

Lastly, I want to thank you for taking the lead on the MacArthur Foundation application. In my opinion your commitment to solving these problems combined with the necessary organizational skills positions you to effectively provide the cross agency leadership for this process. I appreciate your commitment and you can count on the Champaign County Mental Health Board to partner and do what is necessary to address these important issues.

Peter Tracy
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM OF COMMITMENT

Submitted by:

**DR. ROBERT EASTER, PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS;
DR. TOM RAMAGE, PRESIDENT, PARKLAND COLLEGE;
SHEILA FERGUSON, CEO, COMMUNITY ELEMENTS;
BRUCE SUARDINI, CEO, THE PRAIRIE CENTER;
MAYOR DON GERARD, CITY OF CHAMPAIGN;
ACTING VILLAGE PRESIDENT SEAN WIDENER, VILLAGE OF MAHOMET;
MAYOR CHARLES SMITH, VILLAGE OF RANTOUL;
VILLAGE PRESIDENT, ROBERT MCCLEARY, VILLAGE OF SAVOY;
MAYOR LAUREL PRUSSING, CITY OF URBANA;
DR. PATTSI PETRIE, CHAIR, CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BOARD**

We represent a broad cross-section of municipal governments, service providers, educational institutions, and the County Board. We are united in our concern that our local jail is greatly populated by people who are poor, African-American, unemployed, and uneducated. Half, for example, lack a high school degree or GED, and over half are unemployed. A particularly grievous concern is that so many people suffering from addiction or severe mental illnesses are housed in the jail when they would not have to be if suitable alternatives to jail confinement were developed in our county.

We believe that one antidote to these grave problems is to establish a Restorative Justice and Community Resource Center in our county. As the letter from the Champaign County Mental Health Board indicates, we have already begun to lay the groundwork for such a Center. One of this Center's primary aims would be to divert people from the criminal-justice system, particularly the jail. It would likely include a detoxification unit (the closest detoxification unit is over eighty miles away), behavioral-health treatment, job-skills training, restorative-justice programming, and other treatment programs and services carefully targeted to address the need to avoid initial or later jail confinement whenever possible.

Our commitment to the system planning process is to do whatever we can to make this much needed Center a reality in Champaign County. Our institutions will be serving on the Planning Committee (with one mayor representing municipal leaders) and will participate in the work of a subcommittee that will be charged with planning the Center. The plan we help develop will ensure that its operations reflect evidence-based practices, integrate cutting-edge ideas, and are regularly evaluated. And we will maintain, as the Center's first priority, the abatement of jail confinement in Champaign County.

The entities we represent and the many others with whom we will partner all have singular strengths that we will be bringing to this planning process. The Prairie Center and Community Elements are providers of behavioral-health care, and Parkland College is well known for its vocational-training program and an Adult Education Program that provides services and instruction to people lacking a high school diploma and even basic literacy skills. The School of Social Work and the Psychology Department at the University of Illinois can help identify and implement innovative ways to provide direct services effectively at the Center. Finally, cities and other municipalities in Champaign County can join with the County Board in identifying additional partners to include in the Center's planning and operations and in developing the plan to fund the Center.



March 24, 2015

Dear Administrators of the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge:

Champaign Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice (CUCPJ) offers this letter of commitment to the grant application to the MacArthur Foundation by the Champaign County Sheriff's Office. We believe developing this proposal and, hopefully, its eventual funding represent important steps forward for our county. This county would benefit greatly from the type of process being offered by the MacArthur Foundation grant. Therefore, we commit our organization to support planning the mentoring programs which are key to the proposal. In particular, we pledge to focus on advising how such programs can address racial and ethnic disparities in Champaign County. In addition, we provide the following responses to the three questions posed in the RFP.

How would participation in this initiative benefit your jurisdiction?

Founded in 2004, CUCPJ offers a unique and much needed voice to this initiative. We are a grassroots civil rights organization focused on addressing racial and economic disparities in our county. With over 3,000 supporters, members from across the community, and core of several dozen activists, CUCPJ has operated as a watchdog of the criminal justice system, bringing the voices and perspectives of those directly impacted to the attention of policy makers. CUCPJ has called attention to racial disparities in all phases of the criminal justice system. Our activities have included: accompanying defendants and families through the legal process; campaigning to reduce the cost of calls from the jail; promoting the formation of an Urbana Civilian Review Board of Police; serving on a task force focused on racial disparities in juries; organizing events on the impact of felony convictions; sponsoring training on Restorative Circles; and data collection/advocacy on racial disparities in traffic stops. Our 2012-15 Build Programs, Not Jails campaign has used research and advocacy to promote criminal justice reform and jail population reduction. In 2012-13, the county board appointed two CUCPJ members to the Community Justice Task Force, charged with developing proposals for alternatives to incarceration. Our history gives us a vital perspective and constituency which can greatly enhance this initiative.

What current policies and practices should be examined as potential contributors to the inappropriate or unnecessary use of jail in your jurisdiction? Based on our 11 years of action research, we suggest examining:

- **Racial disparities in stops** - African Americans are about twice as likely to be stopped as white drivers in our community. In 2010, 91% of those arrested for jaywalking in Urbana were African-American.
- **Jailing for minor and traffic offenses** – About 80% of those in the jail are booked for non-violent offenses. 20% of those in jail are serving time for traffic offenses despite options for community service.
- **Racial disparities in the jail population** – Consistently, more than 50% of those housed in the jail are African American despite 13% of Champaign County's population being African American.
- **Bonds** - The disparity of bonds set for African Americans versus white defendants should be examined.
- **Mental Illness in the jail** - The jail is often a one-stop drop off for anyone with a mental illness: it also serves as the detox center since there is no substance abuse treatment for the poor in our county.
- **Homelessness** – There are at least twice the number of homeless as there are beds available in local shelters. As a result, the jail often becomes a homeless shelter.

How will your agency comply with the Foundation's expectations...in the planning process, data collection and sharing, and commitment to addressing racial and ethnic disparities?

CUCPJ will consult on how the program can best address racial and ethnic disparities in the jail population and will support the planning and development of a mentoring program to support reduction in the jail population.

Sincerely,

Danielle Chynoweth, Co-Founder, CUCPJ

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

College of Law
504 East Pennsylvania Avenue
Champaign, IL 61820



Sheriff Dan Walsh
Champaign County Sheriff's Office
204 East Main Street
Urbana, IL 61801-2702

March 18, 2015

Dear Sheriff Walsh,

I am a professor of law at the University of Illinois. I have a Ph.D. in social psychology from Princeton University and a J.D. from the University of Chicago, and my research focuses primarily on empirical investigations of the psychological effects of crime on victims and communities, and of punishment on victims, communities and offenders.

I recently learned that Champaign County will be applying for funding from the MacArthur foundation, who has issued a call for proposals to explore whether and how jail is being overused (or misused) in the criminal justice system. I understand that MacArthur wishes grantees to spend funds to evaluate the use of jails from an empirical perspective, with the ambition of collecting and analyzing data on how jails are actually being used on the ground today.

One potential inappropriate use of jail in both Champaign County and elsewhere is incarcerating offenders for violations of conditions of probation or parole, where those conditions are only weakly related—or even altogether unrelated—to the original crime for which the offender was convicted. (This would also apply somewhat to conditions of bail for pretrial detainees.) To know *whether* this is a misuse of jail, we would need to know several things. First, what terms or conditions of probation or parole are being assigned to offenders? Second, are these terms related to the underlying offense? Third, are probationers/parolees violating these terms, and why? And fourth, how often do any violations result in the offenders returning to jail? A related question is whether terms of probation/parole are either assigned or enforced in a way that disproportionately affects some communities, or racial/ethnic groups, more than others—which would also flag a potentially inappropriate use of jail.

These are all empirical questions that cannot be resolved unless we have full data on actual practices and outcomes within a jurisdiction. Assembling and analyzing such data would certainly advance MacArthur's primary interest in evaluating the potential misuse of jail. If Champaign were selected for this grant, and could collect this data, I commit to helping to collect this data, and would analyze and use it to (hopefully) suggest improvements to the system, if such improvements are needed.

Sincerely,

Kenworthy Bilz
Professor of Law

March 31, 2015

Sheriff Dan Walsh
Champaign County Sheriff's Office
204 East Main Street
Urbana IL 61801

Re: Champaign County Grant Application
MacArthur Foundation
Champaign County Jail Study

Sheriff Walsh:

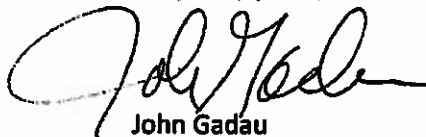
I write on behalf of the Board of Governors of the Champaign County Bar Association (CCBA). The CCBA is a long-standing organization of Champaign County attorneys who practice in the Champaign County Court system. All of the CCBA members are committed to the very best in the functioning of that system, including the criminal justice component.

On March 11, 2015 the CCBA Board of Governors unanimously passed a resolution of support and commitment to the application to be made by your office for a MacArthur Foundation Grant Award to study the reformation and improvement of the Champaign County justice system, particularly regarding the utilization of the Champaign County Jail. The CCBA Board is acutely aware of historical issues regarding jail overcrowding, low-level offenders being incarcerated, citizens with mental illness who present recurring episodes of required incarceration, and other issues relating to county incarceration.

CCBA is committed to be a partner in researching all methods that may improve the criminal justice system. Specifically, CCBA members can assist by serving as mediators in a restorative justice initiative to divert some individuals from the jail while meeting victims' needs and the need to hold individuals accountable for their harmful actions. Empirical data would assist in identifying which cases would have the greatest impact on the jail and in determining how such a restorative system would function best.

CCBA looks forward to working with you and others in the criminal justice system to review current conditions and reform them to the extent possible. The MacArthur Foundation grant funding would be an important initial step in achieving jail population and jail utilization goals.

Very truly yours,



John Gadau

President, Champaign County Bar Association



Champaign County ACLU

Station A - Box 2651, Champaign, IL 61825-2651

March 27, 2015

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY ACLU

Station A - Box 2651
Champaign, IL 61825

email: info@aclu-cu.org

2015-2016 OFFICERS

President:

Carol Spindel
608 W Delaware
Urbana, IL 61801

Vice-President:

Stephen Portnoy
112-D Whitehall Ct,
Urbana, IL 61801

Secretary:

Carol Leff
604 W Washington
Urbana, IL 61801

Treasurer:

Esther Patt
706 S Coler #3
Urbana, IL 61801

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Sheriff Dan Walsh
Champaign County Sheriff's Office
204 E. Main St.
Urbana, IL 61801-2702

Dear Sheriff Walsh,

The Champaign County Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is proud to join in support of the efforts of Champaign County to reduce the over-reliance on incarceration in our community. This Chapter has had a longstanding commitment to work with the County to find solutions to the stark racial disparities in our County's justice system and to create alternatives to treat those with mental illness, in order to divert these individuals out of the criminal justice system.

We believe that the planning process aimed at reform underway in Champaign County is a good vehicle for pursuing these ends. For this reason, we support the County's request for funding.

As noted in the County's MacArthur Foundation grant proposal, the current public discussion and debate over a new jail facility has created a unique opportunity to identify and institute alternatives to incarceration. The goal of lowering incarceration rates through community programs and services has recently been endorsed by two resolutions of the Urbana City Council and is under discussion at other Champaign County jurisdictions. Recent initiatives including the Re-entry Council and the Champaign Justice Executive Council are promising starts and there is a movement, endorsed by the city of Urbana, to establish a Mental Health Court. The process contemplated by the County would strengthen and advance this on-going process.

In February of this year, the Champaign County ACLU sponsored a program on the criminal justice system and the problems of an over-reliance on incarceration. The program drew a wide range of interests from the community, including the police chiefs of Champaign and Urbana (the main urban areas of the County), the deputy sheriff, the mayor of Urbana, county board members, a school board member, several other elected officials, the president of National Alliance on Mental Illness, and many community activists, including those from a local group Citizens With Conviction. The size of the audience and the energy of the participants demonstrate that there is a shared commitment across many constituencies to make real change in Champaign County's criminal justice system.

The Champaign County ACLU will support the County's effort to design, adopt and implement a system for a non-monetary approach to pre-trial release, making such releases contingent on risk assessment and the likelihood of appearing in court, rather than requiring a bond that many people caught up in the criminal justice system cannot afford. We will also help in the planning of the community meeting that will focus on the system plan being developed with this grant's assistance.

We hope and believe that Champaign County could -- with funding from this grant -- become a model for county-wide initiatives for de-incarceration and for treatment outside of jails for those in the justice system. The Champaign County ACLU is committed to participating in this process and strongly urges the MacArthur Foundation to fund Champaign County's proposal.

Carol Spindel, Chapter President, Champaign County ACLU