

Lake County Sheriff's Office

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John D. Idleburg
Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE

LAKE COUNTY AWARDED ADDITIONAL \$700,000.00 BY MACARTHUR FOUNDATION SAFETY AND JUSTICE CHALLENGE TO RETHINK LOCAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

New Funding Will Help Support Initiatives Aimed at Safely Reducing Lake County's Jail Population and Advancing Racial Equity

Lake County is the recipient of a \$700,000.00 grant by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to continue building on efforts in collaboration with local leaders and the community to rethink the local criminal justice system, safely reduce Lake County's jail population, and eliminate racial inequities. The grant brings the Foundation's total investment in Lake County to over \$1.45 million to date, and is part of the [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), a \$246 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration and advance racial equity in local criminal justice systems by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

The Safety and Justice Challenge is supporting local leaders, individuals directly and most impacted by the justice system, and the broader community in Lake County and across the country who are determined to address one of the greatest drivers of over-incarceration in America – the misuse and overuse of jails. Lake County was first selected to join the Safety and Justice Challenge Network in 2017 and has since used the resources and funding provided by the initiative to implement evidence-based solutions.

These solutions include strengthening community-law-enforcement partnerships, ensuring all community sectors have a voice in the justice process, collaborative and innovative approach to justice reform, examining increasing levels of incarceration, including incarceration of those with mental health disorders, examining disparities in the judicial system including people of color and those in other protected classes, and more. As a result, the Lake County Jail population has decreased, crime rates have decreased, and the jail's high-utilizer program has been successful.

Today, Lake County was one of 15 jurisdictions selected for additional funding based on the promise and progress of work to date. This new round of funding will provide the Lake County Sheriff's Office, justice stakeholders, and

community partners with continued support and expert technical assistance to strengthen and expand strategies that address the main drivers, and resulting racial inequities, of local jail incarceration.

Additionally, building on Lake County's progress to date is especially critical as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustices against Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other people of color reinforce the need to transform how the system operates. Our public health driven pandemic efforts reduced our jail population by -27% on people nearing the end of their sentence and lowering non-violent cash bonds. Justice stakeholders will continue to examine jail release failure to appear and recidivism data to change culture and propose policy changes to maintain our pandemic population level. Case-by-case reviews and reduction of arrests by local police were critical to our jail reduction.

Sheriff John D. Idleburg said, "A sustained partnership with the community is critical to redefining safety and I am proud of the work conducted by the Lake County Sheriff's Criminal Justice Community Council. The additional support from the Safety and Justice Challenge will help us center the voices and experiences of those most impacted, strengthen trust, and ensure our work actively responds to the community's needs."

In partnership with Lake County Government, the Lake County State's Attorney's Office, 19th Judicial Circuit Court, Lake County Public Defender's Office, Criminal Justice Community Council, the Lake County Sheriff's Office has developed a comprehensive plan for additional strategies and initiatives over the next two years to invest in a safer, more effective, and more equitable system. These include: diverting people from jail by dropping them off at a wellness center for behavioral health assessments and local service linkage. This will serve as a hub to community organizations, with on-site multi-disciplinary team consisting of a peer recovery specialist, intensive case manager, and a registered nurse. Additionally, we will collect and analyze racial and ethnic data, modify outreach, and course correct when necessary. We will continue our ongoing efforts toward reducing recidivism and reducing our jail's population while increasing the engagement and membership in the criminal justice community council.

More than five years after its public launch, the Safety and Justice Challenge has grown into a collaborative of 51 jurisdictions in 32 states modeling and inspiring reforms to create more fair, just, and equitable local justice systems across the country.

"We must confront the devastating impacts of mass incarceration by a system that over-polices and over-incarcerates Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people," said Laurie Garduque, MacArthur's Director of Criminal Justice. "Over the past five years, the Safety and Justice Challenge has safely reduced the ineffective and harmful use of jails, while learning that jail population reduction alone does not undo the racial inequities perpetuated by an unjust system and our nation's history of systemic racism. We are committed to supporting cities and counties as they reimagine a definition of safety that is inclusive of all communities and makes meaningful progress towards our goal of ending racial and ethnic disparities in jails."

Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said, "Our county will be safer when we address the long-term causes of crime and the historical racial and economic disparities that have plagued our communities for too long. We are thrilled to partner with the Sheriff's Office and the MacArthur Foundation to develop a strategic and data-based approach to the challenges we face in our local justice system."

Several of the nation's leading criminal justice organizations will continue to provide technical assistance and counsel to the Lake County Sheriff's Office, Lake County Government, partners, and the other jurisdictions involved in the Safety and Justice Challenge. These include the Center for Court Innovation, Everyday Democracy, Nexus Community Partners, the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York, JFA Institute,

the Justice Management Institute, Justice System Partners, the Pretrial Justice Institute, Policy Research, Inc., the Vera Institute of Justice, the W. Haywood Burns Institute, Urban Institute, and Bennett Midland.

More information about the work underway in Lake County can be found on www.lakecountyiil.gov/sheriff as well as on www.SafetyandJusticeChallenge.org.

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About the MacArthur Foundation

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supports creative people, effective institutions, and influential networks building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. MacArthur is placing a few big bets that truly significant progress is possible on some of the world's most pressing social challenges, including advancing global climate solutions, decreasing nuclear risk, promoting local justice reform in the U.S., and reducing corruption in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria. In addition to the MacArthur Fellows Program and the global 100&Change competition, the Foundation continues its historic commitments to the role of journalism in a responsive democracy as well as the vitality of our headquarters city, Chicago. More information about the Foundation's criminal justice reform work can be found at www.macfound.org/criminaljustice.

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