



PRESS RELEASE

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Bills that would largely eliminate cash bail would improve Ohioans' health and wellbeing

On any given day, as many as 12,600 Ohioans are held in jail as they await trial, compared to 3,000 in 1978 — driven mostly by bail set by local courts, even though overall crime rates have gone down. Today a coalition of advocates, experts, and community members called on the Ohio General Assembly to pass legislation that would largely eliminate cash bail. [Watch a recording of the press call here.](#)

[House Bill 315](#) and [Senate Bill 182](#) would require courts to make a preliminary release decision within 24 hours of an arrest. If a judge or prosecutor believes a person poses a specific threat, a hearing would be required within 48 hours to 72 hours. The bills have been introduced and are awaiting further hearings.

“Ohioans deserve a legal system that treats us fairly no matter our race, gender or how much money we have,” said Policy Matters Ohio Senior Researcher Piet van Lier. “Research shows that 90% of people detained pretrial are there because they cannot afford bail. That has serious consequences not only for the Ohioans held in jail, but also their families and communities.”

[Policy Matters released a review of research](#) detailing the wide-ranging health detriments of the cash bail system, including driving the spread of disease and exposing incarcerated people and their families to more mental stress and trauma. Research shows that some groups are harmed more than others. For example, courts often stereotype trans people as high flight risks. Black people are more likely to be targeted by the legal system and less likely to have the resources to pay for bail. Women are more likely to be paid low wages and perform uncompensated work and may also have a more difficult time paying their bond. Children often suffer from stress and trauma while a parent is held in jail.

“Cash bail piles onto systemic inequality that already disadvantages people with low incomes, women, Black and brown people and those in the LGBTQ+ community,” said Policy Matters State Policy Fellow Tanisha Pruitt, PhD. “Eliminating it will go a long way toward ensuring all Ohioans are equal before the law.”

Madeline Jones said while she was held pretrial at Cuyahoga County Jail, she had a miscarriage and her four children struggled, as did her mother who stepped in to care for them. She turned herself in when a warrant arrived in the mail and spent 20 days in jail for charges that were later dropped. “Stress played a big part of it,” she said of her miscarriage, “because I knew I shouldn’t even be in here.”

Kareem Henton of the Bail Project Cleveland said many people who need proper medical and mental health care don’t get it while they’re held in jail, and in many cases their situation is made worse. “Too many languish in jail, which is not treatment and doesn’t help them with their pain, psychological needs or assistance in sober living,” he said. “These ignored souls have a higher recidivism rate.”

Advocates said that to improve Ohioans’ health most effectively, the General Assembly must pass bills that mandate a clear presumption for release without relying on risk assessments and onerous pretrial supervision.

“Folks who are held pretrial, these are legally innocent people who are held prior to the point of being found guilty of a crime,” said ACLU attorney Patrick Higgins. “The critically important thing is the presumption of release ... to make sure we’re not destabilizing simply because they don’t have the cash in their bank account for bail.”