

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RESULTS INDICATE JAIL USE IN CHARLESTON COUNTY FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED AND MORE WORK IS NEEDED TO CONTINUE IMPROVING THE LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. Today the Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, or CJCC, released its 2020 Annual Report illustrating key system trends, outlining results to-date, and identifying opportunities for further targeted improvement efforts within the local criminal justice system. The CJCC's efforts continue to underscore the importance of intentional, data-guided strategies that engage the community in improving the local criminal justice system.

The report demonstrates that strategies such as prioritizing alternatives to jail for lower level charges and supporting the use of community-based options for individuals experiencing homelessness, mental illness and/or substance use disorders are making a difference. Highlighted results from the 2014 baseline to 2020 include:

- Local bookings in the jail decreased by 62%,
- Bookings for specifically targeted municipal and magistrate charges decreased by 84%,
- The number of municipal and magistrate charges entering the jail decreased by 78%,
- The number of individuals cycling repeatedly through the jail decreased by 63%, and
- Local jail population decreased by 38%.

“Thankfully, the positive trends we have seen in our local justice system were already happening prior to COVID-19 and, even with the pandemic, we’re continuing to see progress. The data further underscores the importance of pursuing our FY 21- FY 23 strategic plan objectives to sustain and build on this progress,” said CJCC Chairman, Captain Jason Bruder, Charleston Police Department.

The report notes that the challenges in Charleston County’s local justice system are complex and key data indicates areas in need of further intervention. These areas include:

- Charleston’s local jail population is almost entirely pretrial with lengths of stay increasing as charges coming in are more serious than they used to be (most often General Sessions).
- The majority of defendants released into the community while their cases are pending do not get re-arrested while waiting for court, and a minority are consistently and repeatedly re-arrested.
- Defendants that are re-arrested do so most often within six months of release, and they are (on average) re-arrested more than once while waiting for court.

- There are also defendants eligible for pretrial release that stay for a longer period of time because of limited resources to afford a financial bond.
- Releases on financial bonds consistently have worse outcomes than those released on their own recognizance, and judges have limited options and services available to address these challenges and barriers.
- The time to disposition, in General Sessions, is increasing and the number of cases awaiting justice is growing. Current estimates suggest if the pace of case processing experienced in 2020 continued cases pending could grow by approximately 40% in roughly two and a half years.

“The results the CJCC achieved through collaborative and deliberate, data-guided solutions speaks volumes about what can be achieved through focused community-wide collaboration. The data shows that progress is continuing and we must not fall backwards. While a lot has been accomplished, there is still much more to do,” said Otha Meadows, CJCC Community Representative, President & CEO, Charleston Urban League.

A sample of [FY 21 – FY 23 Strategic Plan](#) initiatives moving forward include:

- Launching a Race Equity Fellowship program for community leaders to advance equity,
- Piloting a Jail-Involved Familiar Face initiative to achieve positive outcomes for individuals that most often cycle in and out of jail,
- Advancing a proposal for pretrial service option(s) that help maximize safety, appearance and liberty, and
- Supporting effective case management efforts to help reduce the backlog of cases.

To read the 2020 Annual Report or for more information about the CJCC, visit [cjcc.charlestoncounty.org](http://cjcc.charlestoncounty.org).

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### ***About the CJCC***

*The CJCC is a collaboration of elected and senior officials, law enforcement leaders, judicial and court leadership, behavioral health professionals, victim and legal advocates, and various community leaders working in service of the Charleston community. The mission of the CJCC is to assist in making sustainable, data-driven improvements to Charleston County’s criminal justice system and thereby improve public safety and community well-being. The CJCC is currently funded by a Safety + Justice Challenge grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more information, visit [www.cjcc.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.cjcc.charlestoncounty.org).*

### **MEDIA CONTACT FOR CHARLESTON COUNTY CJCC:**

Adina Baer Gross, Communications & Community Outreach  
843-259-9820; [abgross@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:abgross@charlestoncounty.org)