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**CHARLESTON COUNTY AWARDED \$2.25 MILLION BY MACARTHUR FOUNDATION TO REDUCE JAIL POPULATION, IMPROVE LOCAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND MODEL REFORMS FOR THE NATION**

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C., April 13, 2016 – The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation today announced a \$2.25 million grant to Charleston County’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) to implement reforms to reduce the jail population and create a more effective local criminal justice system.

Charleston County is one of 11 jurisdictions in the country chosen to receive significant funding and access to expert technical assistance to implement a plan for reform over the next two years. In total, nearly \$25 million was awarded in support of ambitious plans to create fairer, more effective local justice systems across the country.

“We are ecstatic and grateful the MacArthur Foundation chose to invest in our community and the enhancements to our criminal justice system,” said Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Chairman Mitch Lucas.

The grant is a part of the [Safety and Justice Challenge](#), a national initiative supported by the Foundation with an initial \$75 million to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. The Challenge is establishing a network of jurisdictions to model and inspire effective local criminal justice reforms across the country. Last May, Charleston County was one of the 20 jurisdictions chosen by the Foundation for initial grants and expert counsel to develop plans for reform after a highly competitive selection process that drew applications from nearly 200 jurisdictions in 45 states and territories.

“The way we misuse and over-use jails in this country takes an enormous toll on our social fabric and undermines the credibility of government action, with particularly dire consequences for communities of color,” said Julia Stasch, President of the MacArthur Foundation. “The thoughtful plans and demonstrable political will give us confidence that these jurisdictions will show that change is possible in even the most intractable justice-related challenges in cities, counties, and states across the country.”

With the award, the CJCC will implement reforms to address the main drivers of the County’s jail population, including increased community engagement, refined policing practices, alternatives to jail for those suffering from mental illness, substance abuse and homelessness,



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improving the pretrial process and an emphasis on collecting and analyzing data to continue advancing progress and accountability. The goal is to reduce the jail population by 25 percent in the next three years.

“These strategies help us to better sort the high risk from the low risk, keeping dangerous people behind bars and providing law enforcement and the courts more appropriate options when dealing with low-risk offenders,” said Lucas.

The CJCC, a collaboration of elected and appointed officials, law enforcement leaders, judicial and court leadership, behavioral health professionals, various community leaders and many more, have developed a transformation plan in order to safely drive down jail usage, address racial and ethnic disproportionality and/or disparity, and continually improve the local justice system.

As in most jurisdictions, people of color are overrepresented in Charleston County’s jail population. African Americans are arrested nearly three times as often as Whites. To address this disproportionality and further explore disparity, the CJCC will develop and provide law enforcement with a risk-based decision tool for a more uniform approach during decisions to arrest, employ mapping technology, and work closely with neighborhood leaders. In addition, the CJCC will pilot an automated court reminder system to reduce the use of criminal bench warrants.

In addition, the CJCC will launch reform initiatives including:

- Development of a triage service to provide alternatives to jail for those suffering from substance abuse, mental illness, and homelessness pre and/or post booking.
- Create a centralized data warehouse that will streamline information, regularly assess system performance, and assist in advancing progress.
- Launch a risk-based pretrial management system to ensure the decision for pretrial release or detention is based on standardized assessments of risk and expedite indigence screening, improve access to counsel and reduce time to disposition.

Despite growing national attention to the large number of Americans confined in state and federal prisons, significantly less attention has been paid to the local level, where the criminal justice system primarily operates and where over-incarceration begins. Jail populations have more than tripled since the 1980s, as have the cumulative costs of building and running them. Nationwide misuse of jails most harshly impacts low-income communities and communities of color. For example, while African Americans and Latinos make up 30 percent of Americans, they make up 51 percent of the U.S. jail population. Today, one in three Americans believes his or her local justice system is unfair, according to a [poll](#) conducted by Zogby Analytics and supported by the Foundation. MacArthur launched the Safety and Justice Challenge in February



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2015 to address these issues by creating fairer, more effective local justice systems and spurring national demand for reform.

Several of the nation's leading criminal justice organizations will provide technical assistance and counsel to the CJCC and other jurisdictions: the Center for Court Innovation, the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York, the Justice Management Institute, Justice System Partners, the Vera Institute of Justice, Pretrial Justice Institute, and W. Haywood Burns Institute.

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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 [over-incarceration](#), [global climate change](#), nuclear risk, and significantly increasing capital for the social sector. In addition to the [MacArthur Fellows Program](#), the Foundation continues its historic commitments to the role of [journalism](#) in a responsible and responsive democracy; the strength and vitality of our headquarters city, [Chicago](#); and generating new knowledge about critical issues.

More information about the Safety and Justice Challenge is available at [www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org](http://www.safetyandjusticechallenge.org).