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Today marks one year since Illinois implemented the Pretrial Fairness Act and became the first state in the country to completely end the use of money bond. This historic legislation was designed to create a more equitable criminal legal system by ensuring pretrial release and detention decisions are based on public safety rather than the size of someone's bank account. Since the law took effect, [both pretrial jailing and crime rates are down](#).

For decades, hundreds of thousands of people were booked into Illinois jails each year while awaiting trial and presumed innocent—most only because they couldn't afford to purchase their freedom. This practice disproportionately impacted Black communities across the state. In Cook County, more than 75% of people incarcerated pretrial were Black even though less than 25% of Cook County residents are Black.

The Pretrial Fairness Act ended the archaic and discriminatory use of money bonds and is ensuring that more people are able to keep their jobs, housing, and custody of their children while awaiting trial. People jailed pretrial are [more likely to be convicted and serve longer sentences](#) than people who are not incarcerated as they await trial. By reducing pretrial jailing, Illinois is making the justice system more equitable.

Before the elimination of money bond, counties across Illinois collected [more than \\$140 million in bond payments](#) each year. Many families were forced to choose between paying rent and paying a ransom for their loved one's freedom. The Pretrial Fairness Act has made sure that those millions of dollars now remain in our state's most marginalized communities. Although money bond was supposed to be returned at the end of the case after someone attended all their court dates, data from 2016 through 2020 showed that [only about one dollar out of every five paid for bond was ever refunded](#), regardless of whether or not someone returned to court.

Prior to the law's implementation, opponents spent millions of dollars trying to convince Illinoisans that "jail doors will swing open" and the law would bring the "end of days." Initial findings from individual counties and the Office of Statewide Pretrial Services is telling a very different story. [In Cook County](#), 88% of people had not been issued a warrant for a failure to appear while on pretrial release and less than 5% of people were rearrested on charges related to violence. These rates are [similar to pre-reform rates](#), even with dramatically more people returning to the community while awaiting trial. [Data from the Office of Statewide Pretrial Services](#) shows that 95% of people under their supervision in 78 counties have returned to court.

By eliminating money bond, Illinois took a critical step towards reducing mass incarceration and became a national leader in pretrial reform. We remain committed to holding the courts accountable to these reforms and defending them in the legislature.

