

[117H5034]

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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To establish a new Justice Department grant program to reduce the number of individuals incarcerated in local jails, reduce the number of days individuals are incarcerated in local jails, and support community-led local justice reinvestment.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BELL introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To establish a new Justice Department grant program to reduce the number of individuals incarcerated in local jails, reduce the number of days individuals are incarcerated in local jails, and support community-led local justice reinvestment.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Community First Pre-
5 trial Reform Act” or the “Community First Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GRANTS AUTHORIZED.**

2 (a) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—The Attorney General,
3 acting through the Bureau of Justice Assistance, shall
4 make grants to eligible partnerships for purposes of reduc-
5 ing the number of individuals in jails operated by units
6 of local government and the number of days such individ-
7 uals spend in jail as follows:

8 (1) Grants for analysis and planning, which
9 shall be used to—

10 (A) collect and analyze local criminal jus-
11 tice and incarceration data, including data on
12 equity disparities; and

13 (B) develop a strategic, collaborative plan
14 to decrease local jail incarceration that shall be
15 public facing.

16 (2) Grants for implementation of the plan de-
17 scribed in paragraph (1)(B) and which may be used
18 for activities to reduce the number of individuals in-
19 carcerated in local jails and to reduce the number of
20 days that individuals are so incarcerated including—

21 (A) reducing the use of cash bail;

22 (B) reducing revocations of conditional re-
23 lease;

24 (C) creating or increasing the availability
25 of pretrial services, including efforts undertaken

1 in collaboration with community-based organi-
2 zations and nonprofits;

3 (D) investing in case processing and proc-
4 esses to reduce overall time to disposition and
5 time between court events;

6 (E) ensuring early assignment of counsel
7 and presence of counsel at individuals' first
8 court appearance or bail hearing;

9 (F) providing training to various actors
10 within the criminal justice system on indigent
11 defense that is aligned with best practices in
12 the field;

13 (G) creating or expanding diversion pro-
14 grams that do not require an individual to enter
15 into a guilty plea and do not use incarceration
16 as a sanction for noncompliance—

17 (i) at the pre-arrest phase;

18 (ii) at the pre-booking phase; and

19 (iii) at the post-booking phase; or

20 (H) any other emerging, promising, or evi-
21 dence-based practices that an eligible partner-
22 ship proposes and the Attorney General deems
23 likely to reduce local jail incarceration.

1 (b) ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP.—An eligible partner-
2 ship is a partnership between not less than two of the fol-
3 lowing:

4 (1) A unit of local government.

5 (2) A territory.

6 (3) An Indian tribe.

7 (4) A nonprofit organization.

8 (c) APPLICATION.—An application for a grant shall
9 include the following:

10 (1) Details of the range of pretrial services
11 available within the jurisdiction where the jail being
12 targeted for incarceration rate reduction under this
13 Act is located.

14 (2) A plan to ensure that individuals in pretrial
15 contact with the justice system will be subject to the
16 least restrictive conditions or combination of condi-
17 tions necessary to reasonably address the imminent
18 risk of willful flight or the risk of imminent threat
19 of serious physical harm to a reasonably identifiable
20 person.

21 (3) A plan for ongoing process evaluation and
22 outcome evaluation.

23 (4) Either—

24 (A) data—

1 (i) disaggregated by key demographic
2 indicators, including factors such as com-
3 munity background and identity, on incar-
4 ceration for correctional facilities within
5 the local jurisdiction for each of the last
6 five calendar years that includes——

7 (I) the average daily population;
8 (II) the percentage of individuals
9 held pretrial and post-conviction; and
10 (III) the average length of stay
11 for individuals held pretrial and post-
12 conviction; and

13 (ii) disaggregated by key demographic
14 indicators on arrests made by all law en-
15 forcement entities operating within the
16 local jurisdiction over each of the last five
17 calendar years; or

18 (B) in the event that elements of such in-
19 carceration or arrest data are not able to be
20 compiled and reported, a comprehensive plan to
21 obtain as much of the unavailable data as pos-
22 sible within the first year of the award.

23 **SEC. 3. REQUIREMENTS.**

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—Grantees shall——

1 (1) consult in all phases of planning, implemen-
2 tation, and evaluation with municipal, county, and
3 State law enforcement agencies, courts in the local
4 jurisdiction, public defense organizations and crimi-
5 nal defense practitioners in the local jurisdiction,
6 local substance use and mental health authorities,
7 local community members, local community members
8 who have been justice-involved, and community-
9 based organizations and service providers;

10 (2) analyze local jail incarceration and arrest
11 data to identify the drivers of jail incarceration and
12 equity disparities and ground jail population reduc-
13 tion strategies in that data;

14 (3) reduce incarceration rates by no less than
15 5 percent the first year of an implementation grant,
16 10 percent in each subsequent year, and 50 percent
17 by the end of the grant period;

18 (4) in consultation with the Bureau of Justice
19 Assistance—

20 (A) adopt and implement a methodology
21 for measuring equity disparities in jail incarcer-
22 ation;

23 (B) set goals for the reduction of equity
24 jail incarceration disparities; and

1 (C) decrease levels of incarceration across
2 all races and ethnicities;

3 (5) engage an external evaluator to coordinate
4 data collection and reporting in an ongoing fashion
5 and perform both a process and outcome evaluation,
6 with support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance;
7 and

8 (6) use financial savings created through de-
9 creased incarceration to sustain programmatic and
10 community-based efforts to reduce jail incarceration.

11 (b) GRANT OVERSIGHT REQUIREMENT.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—If a grantee fails to meet
13 the incarceration rate and equity disparities reduc-
14 tion requirements under subsection (a)(3) in any
15 year of the award, the Bureau of Justice Assistance
16 shall perform an audit of the use of their award and
17 the grantee shall implement new strategies based on
18 that audit. If a grantee fails to meet the incarcer-
19 ation rate and equity disparities reduction require-
20 ments under subsection (a)(3) in any two consecu-
21 tive years of the award, the Attorney General shall
22 terminate the award.

23 (2) MODIFICATION AUTHORITY.—The Bureau
24 of Justice Assistance may grant a modification to
25 the incarceration rate reduction requirement under

1 subsection (a)(3) if the Bureau determines after an
2 audit that the failure to meet the incarceration rate
3 reduction requirement was caused by an increase in
4 population in the covered jurisdiction. If a grantee
5 fails to meet the modified reduction requirements in
6 any two subsequent years of the award, the Attorney
7 General shall terminate the award.

8 **SEC. 4. GRANT AMOUNTS.**

9 (a) PLANNING GRANTS.—A grant under section
10 2(a)(1) may be for not more than \$100,000 for a single
11 grantee, and shall be for a term of 1 year.

12 (b) IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.—A grant under sec-
13 tion 2(a)(2) shall be for a term of 6 years, and shall be
14 structured as follows:

15 (1) For the first year of the grant term, an
16 amount shall be disbursed that is to be not less than
17 \$500,000 and not more than \$3,000,000, contingent
18 upon acceptance of a grantee's proposed budget for
19 activities under the grant, which may be subject to
20 revision during the award process.

21 (2) Award amounts shall decrease annually
22 by—

23 (A) 10 percent in the second year;

24 (B) 15 percent in the third year;

25 (C) 20 percent in the fourth year; and

1 (D) 25 percent in the fifth year.

2 (3) Award amounts during the sixth year of the
3 award may not be used for programmatic activities
4 and shall support only program evaluation and the
5 drafting of a final report, and such funds shall be
6 available to the grantees until expended.

7 **SEC. 5. SELECTION PRIORITY.**

8 In selecting grantees, the Attorney General shall—

9 (1) give priority to applicants from jurisdictions
10 with the highest incarceration rates that are not al-
11 ready in decline and whose applications contain the
12 most ambitious and attainable plans for reducing
13 that rate;

14 (2) give additional priority to applicants from
15 jurisdictions seeking to use funds under this Act to
16 prevent the local government from expanding the
17 number of beds in local correctional facilities;

18 (3) for any year in which there will only be one
19 new or ongoing award, ensure that a small metro-
20 politan, micropolitan, or noncore area is the recipi-
21 ent of the award;

22 (4) for any year in which there will be more
23 than one new or ongoing award, ensure that small
24 metropolitan, micropolitan, or noncore areas are the
25 recipients of at least two awards; and

1 (5) for any year in which there will be three or
2 more new or ongoing awards, ensure that no more
3 than one large central metropolitan area is a recipi-
4 ent of an award.

5 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

6 In this Act:

7 (1) The term “conditional release” means pro-
8 bation, parole, supervised release, home confinement,
9 community supervision, and other practices under
10 which an individual is supervised in the community
11 by the criminal justice system and may be incarcer-
12 ated if found in violation of the conditions of their
13 release.

14 (2) The term “diversion” means a program or
15 practice that—

16 (A) places individuals who come into con-
17 tact with the criminal justice system into alter-
18 native processes outside the standard scope of
19 criminal justice processing; and

20 (B) reduces an individual’s involvement in
21 the criminal justice system in both the short
22 and long term.

23 (3) The term “emerging practice” means a pro-
24 gram or practice—

1 (A) with initial implementation resulting in
2 decreased local jail incarceration in one or more
3 communities; and

4 (B) that will be evaluated through a well-
5 designed and rigorous study.

6 (4) The term “evidence-based practice” means
7 a program or practice that—

8 (A) is demonstrated to be effective when
9 implemented with fidelity;

10 (B) is based on a clearly articulated and
11 empirically supported theory;

12 (C) has measurable outcomes relevant to
13 reducing jail incarceration, including a detailed
14 description of the outcomes produced in a par-
15 ticular population, whether urban or rural; and

16 (D) has been scientifically tested and prov-
17 en effective through randomized control studies
18 or comparison group studies and with the abil-
19 ity to replicate and scale.

20 (5) The term “micropolitan area” has the
21 meaning established under the Centers for Disease
22 Control and Prevention’s (hereinafter in this Act re-
23 ferred to as the “CDC”) National Center for Health
24 Statistics Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for
25 Counties.

1 (6) The term “small metropolitan area” has the
2 meaning established under the CDC’s National Cen-
3 ter for Health Statistics Urban-Rural Classification
4 Scheme for Counties.

5 (7) The term “noncore areas” has the meaning
6 established under the CDC’s National Center for
7 Health Statistics Urban-Rural Classification Scheme
8 for Counties.

9 (8) The term “post-booking diversion” means a
10 program or practice that diverts individuals from
11 formal criminal justice system processing after for-
12 mal intake processing into jail.

13 (9) The term “pre-booking diversion” means a
14 program or practice that diverts individuals from
15 formal criminal justice system processing prior to
16 arrest or prior to formal intake processing into jail.

17 (10) The term “promising practice” means a
18 program or practice that—

19 (A) is demonstrated to be effective based
20 on positive outcomes relevant to reducing jail
21 incarceration from one or more objective, inde-
22 pendent, and scientifically valid evaluations, as
23 documented in writing to the Attorney General;
24 and

1 (B) will be evaluated through a well-de-
2 signed and rigorous study.

3 (11) The term “equity disparities” means an
4 measurable differences in outcomes, treatment, or
5 access to services within the criminal justice system
6 that are correlated with demographic factors such
7 community background and identity.

8 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

9 There are authorized to be appropriated—

10 (1) \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026
11 through 2030 for planning grants; and

12 (2) \$100,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026
13 through 2030 for implementation grants, of which
14 10 percent of any appropriated amount is reserved
15 specifically for evaluation activities.