

THE BAIL PROJECT

INDIANAPOLIS

Judiciary Report
March 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bail Project is a national nonprofit that pays bail for people in need at no cost to them or their loved ones. In addition to our direct services, we work at the policy level to advance comprehensive bail reform. The following report was prepared at the request of the Marion County Superior Court. Our hope is that this report and the accompanying data will aid our continuing discussion of the complex issue of wealth-based pretrial detention in Indianapolis.

KEY FINDINGS AND TAKEAWAYS:

- Over the last three years, The Bail Project's local branch in Indianapolis has provided free bail assistance to almost one thousand low-income Hoosiers, saving the county nearly a million dollars in unnecessary pretrial detention costs.
- Collectively, The Bail Project's clients in Indianapolis have now made over 3,686 court appearances with an overall appearance rate of **95%**, offering ample evidence that people return to court at high rates without having financial "skin in the game."
- The charges our Indianapolis clients face have overwhelmingly been misdemeanors and low-level (F6 or F5) felonies.
- Of the 980 client bailouts,¹ 630 (64%) have now closed all of their The Bail Project-assisted cases.²
- In almost a quarter of those 630 client bailouts, all of the cases were completely dismissed.
- Of those who received convictions, only 15% were required to serve any additional time incarcerated. Put another way, for **85%** of The Bail Project's Indianapolis clients, the day we posted bail was the last day they saw the inside of a jail or prison cell on that case. Without that intervention, **almost 9 out of 10 people** we assisted, would have continued to be needlessly incarcerated, at taxpayer expense, without having being convicted.
- When examining overall rearrests during the pretrial period, the overwhelming majority of The Bail Project clients (73%) are not arrested for a new allegation. For those that were rearrested for a new allegation, 82 percent were rearrested for misdemeanors and low level (F6 and F5) felonies. Rearrests for F4, F3, and F2 level felonies were extremely rare, no rearrests occurred for F1 felonies, and, only a fraction of one percent of all The Bail Project rearrests were for allegations of murder.

¹ The Bail Project has supported 958 client bailouts by posting bail for an individual's pretrial release. Additionally, in special circumstances, (often at Court request) we have supported 22 individuals released on recognizance by providing community-based support and court notifications. One client bailout may include multiple bonds as long as those bonds were posted within 10 days of each other. In a few cases, a client may have multiple bailouts. TBP has supported 967 unique individuals.

² Cases closed refers to cases that have been resolved through reaching a final disposition or forfeiture of a bond. Only 4% of closed cases are forfeitures.

- These numbers represent a significant advantage over rearrest rates for those for whom the commercial bail bond industry stands surety. Indeed, our analysis shows that those for whom The Bail Project posts bail **are 20 percent less likely to be arrested** for new charges as those who are released on bonds paid by the Commercial Bail Bond Industry.
- This result is all the more remarkable given that The Bail Project serves a high- needs population with most clients residing in zip codes with household incomes well below the median in Indianapolis. In fact, **Over 70%** of The Bail Project's Indianapolis clients identify at least one need for housing, substance use treatment, employment, or mental health resources. Yet despite these hardships and a sample that skews far more poor and under-resourced versus commercial bail bond clients, when examining rearrest outcomes across all of our cases, we significantly outperform the bondsmen.
- This overperformance vs the Bail Bond industry does not just represent a public safety advantage, but also significant financial savings to the county. That is because there is actually little overlap between Bail Project Clients and those for whom the commercial bond industry stands as surety. In the main, Bail Project clients have so little access to capital they cannot afford to pay the fees a bondsman requires as the price of freedom. Thus, without the intervention of a charitable bail fund, these individuals would remain incarcerated at taxpayer expense and with devastating consequences to themselves and their families.
- Given the extraordinary attention that several of our cases have received, The Bail Project has, in this document, provided a deep dive into each of the cases in which a client has been rearrested on a murder charge. In addition, we have included a review of just a few of the many other (over two dozen) instances identified by The Bail Project in which people released by judges, or bonded out by commercial bondsmen have gone on to be rearrested for murder.
- Put another way, though homicide rearrests have been exploited in the press and political circles in order to suggest that charitable bail funds pose a risk to public safety, any real analysis—such as that contained here, quickly reveals that in fact, those, released by The Bail Project are not more likely to be rearrested for homicide charges than those released by other methods. The only differences: The Bail Project is transparent and data-driven, The Bail Project offers solutions, and The Bail Project is free.
- It is worth noting that while The Bail Project is committed to data, transparency, and learning, the same cannot be said for the commercial bail bond industry. Indeed, as a result of the practice of allowing bondsmen to remove themselves from court records after the surrender or rearrest of a defendant, to the practice of rarely listing the specific bondsmen or agency in MyCase, the commercial bail bond industry goes to impressive lengths to ensure opacity and obscure data that would allow any head to head comparison of the performance of the for-profit bail bond industry vs. The Bail Project. Thus it is perhaps no surprise that the Bail Bond Industry does not collect comprehensive data on rearrests or even their actual success in returning clients to court, nor does any court system, or police or prosecutorial agency. That void created real challenges in generating the reliable data set that ultimately allowed the comparison which now proves that it is in fact the operation of the Commercial Bail Bond Industry—not Charitable Bail Funds—that represents the greater threat to public safety.
- Finally, in response to the court's requests for data, and because we believe that methodology is

important, we have created a web portal, <https://tbp-client-data.vercel.app/>, through which the judges of Marion County can access the specific lists and raw data upon which this report is based. As this data is both private and proprietary, we grant this access with the understanding that it is not to be disseminated, downloaded, or shared beyond the sitting judges of Marion County, and is to be used solely for the edification and private internal discussions of said judges. To that end, each judge will be granted a unique login and password, and the portal will forensically mark, track and log all activity.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

THE BAIL PROJECT'S MISSION

Cash bail is the single biggest driver of incarceration in America, filling jails with people who are accused of crimes, but not yet convicted, and disproportionately from Black communities.

The Bail Project is a national nonprofit organization that has provided free bail assistance to over 21,000 low-income individuals across thirty jurisdictions. Through our model of Community Release with Support, we connect our clients to voluntary services and resources and provide court reminders and transportation assistance. In the past four years, across the country, The Bail Project has supported clients' return to 72,291 court dates. Working to resolve their cases from outside jail walls, thousands of our clients have had all of their cases dismissed. Indeed across the country, over 30%, (and in some jurisdictions as high as 50%) of the cases in which The Bail Project has posted bond have been dismissed.

OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE: INDIANAPOLIS

The Bail Project's Indianapolis office began operations in December 2018. From December 2018 through December 2021, we have supported the release of nearly a thousand individuals. The majority of our client referrals are received from the Indianapolis Public Defender's office, but we also receive calls for help from families, churches, and employers.

Client bailouts were approximately 100 per quarter until after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic (Q3 2020). During 2021, client bailouts have declined quarter to quarter.

Despite these declines, in terms of its core mission and central promise, to date, in Indianapolis, The Bail Project has supported clients' return to 3,686 court dates for a 95% court appearance rate.

Of our (630) clients with closed cases:

- 21% had all of their cases completely dismissed
- The median case length, from the time of booking to case closure, is 268 days
- For those that reached a disposition, 84% were did not serve any additional time in jail or prison.

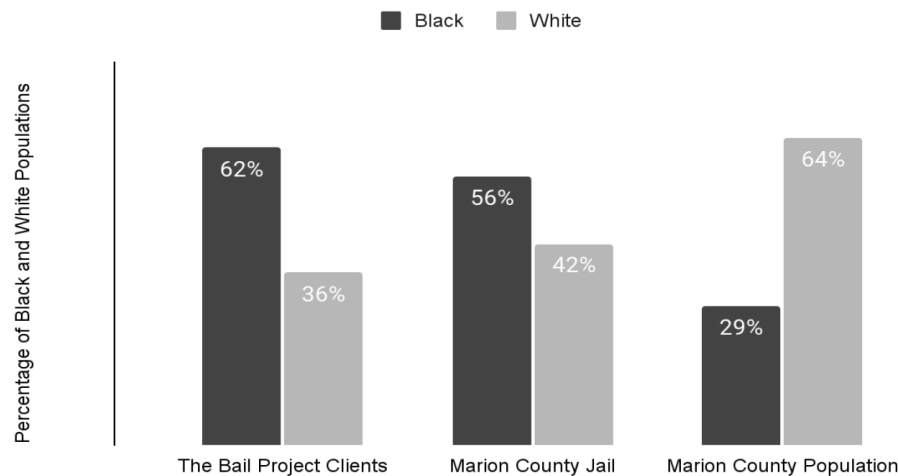
Those numbers yield a ballpark figure for days of incarceration saved – just in the *closed* cases to date of 18,900

days.³ At an average daily cost of \$52 dollars,⁴ that represents a savings to the county of nearly a million dollars.

INDIANAPOLIS CLIENT CHARACTERISTICS⁵

Now, several years in, we can offer a fairly comprehensive picture of our client base, and state with certainty that our clients represent those most impacted by disparities in the criminal legal system in Indianapolis, unemployment, and under-funded social services. Seventy-nine percent of our clients are male. Sixty-two percent are identified as Black, 36% as white, and 1% as Latinx, which is similar to the racial demographics of the Marion County jail population.⁶ When comparing jail population demographics to the overall population of Marion County, Black residents are considerably overrepresented in the jail population.⁷

Comparison of Black and White Populations



Unsurprisingly, cash bond amounts posted by The Bail Project have risen across the three years of operation in Indianapolis. The average cash bond posted from December 2018 to December 2021 is \$2,125. About one in every five Indianapolis residents live in poverty.⁸ To afford the average bond that The Bail Project posts, these citizens

³ National number of days pretrial was gathered from: "Felony Defendants in 75 Large Urban Counties, 2009", published by BJS and based on nationally-representative sample of defendants in urban counties. This data was also used in the following Hamilton Project report: "The Economics of Bail and Pretrial Detention", Brookings Institution (2018). To get the baseline of the number of days per client, we subtracted the national days held pretrial by the median days that TBP clients are detained before release.

⁴ [In.gov FAQ](#) statistics, How much does it cost to keep an offender in prison?

⁵ All TBP client characteristics information in this section represents clients served from December 2018 - December 2021.

⁶ As Data for the overall population is not analyzed by the courts thus understanding baselines and outcomes for different sub-populations is a general mystery for all stakeholders. We believe that a more robust data set along with further research and data transparency is needed to understand the relationship between rearrests, over-policing in certain communities, bond-setting for rearrests, and disparities in rearrests by demographic sub-populations. Transparency on data and evaluation of arrest trends should be a priority for the state. Finally, there are other important social and economic factors such as employment, family stability, and mental health factors that are impacted by incarceration that should be reviewed in conjunction to recidivism rates that also matter to public safety and public health and could offer a fuller picture of systemic successes and failures from which to draw policy recommendations.

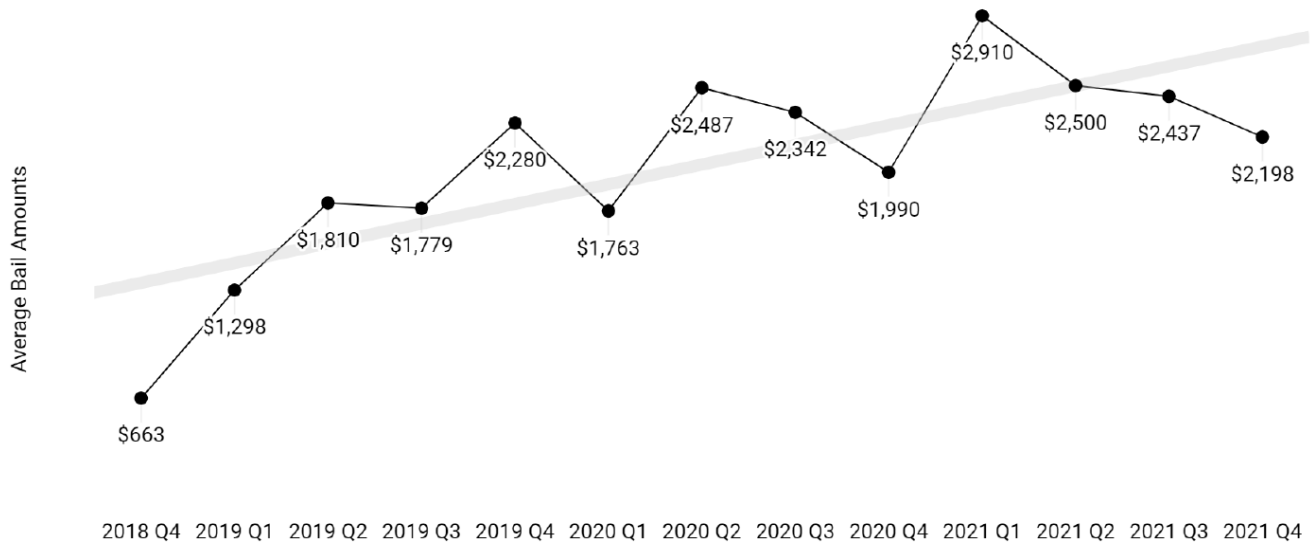
⁷ Sources for Black and White population comparisons: TBP client data, BJS 2018 Annual Survey of Jails, US Census Bureau 2021 Quick Facts.

⁸ US Census Bureau 2021 Quick Facts.

would need to find and pay at least two months of their gross annual income.

The slight increase in bonds posted may be due to releases and bond setting factors related to COVID-19 since higher averages occur predominantly in quarters post-pandemic.

TBP Client Average Bail Amounts Over Time

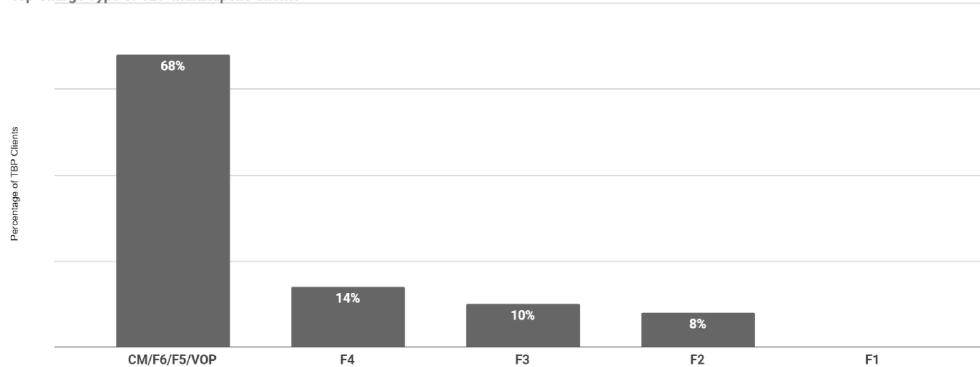


CHARGE PROFILE – INDIANAPOLIS

Once a judge has approved a defendant for bail, The Bail Project determines whether we can provide assistance based on the bail amount set and whether we can adequately support the individual through our services and those in the community. While we do not disqualify people based on charges, preferring to use bail amount as a better proxy for severity, there is, nonetheless, a significant skew toward low-level offenses and lower bail amounts as we try to help the most individuals with the resources we have.

Indeed, misdemeanors, VOP’s and low-level felony (F5 and F6) charges make up the vast majority of the cases in which The Bail Project posts bail.⁹

Top Charge Type of TBP Indianapolis Clients



⁹ Top charge types for TBP clients are documented in TBP’s client-tracking data system and collected from Indiana’s Odyssey case management system, mycase.IN.gov. For clients that had more than one case/charge, the most severe top charge type was calculated.

As the chart above illustrates, a relatively small number of The Bail Project clients face F4, F3, or F2 felony allegations. And a small fraction of one percent (<1%) has F1 as the top charge.

COMMUNITY RELEASE METRICS – INDIANAPOLIS

Due to The Bail Project's rapid expansion, the data build-out for ancillary services has lagged significantly behind the data build and collection components for The Bail Project's core mission: To demonstrate that bail is not needed to ensure high rates of return to court. As a result, hard numbers are simply unavailable for many referral and advocacy engagement metrics¹⁰. That said, building out this data capacity is a priority and The Bail Project hopes to begin robust (rather than anecdotal) data collection in the near future. While not a sufficient substitute for hard numbers, we have included in an appendix some letters from local service providers attesting to the work we have done together.

Beyond the anecdotal, there is some data (though not nearly as robust as we would like) that can offer some insight into our clients' needs and circumstances:

- 63% of those receiving bail assistance report not being able to afford transportation to get to court.
- 71% report childcare as a potential obstacle to making all court appearances
- 51% report being unemployed
- 24% report having unmet medical needs while in jail

PROJECT PERFORMANCE TO DATE: ALL BAIL PROJECT CLIENTS AND REARRESTS FOR A NEW ALLEGATION (DECEMBER 2018 - NOVEMBER 2021)

To get an initial sense of the public safety and rearrest data, we looked broadly at our performance metrics to date. The Bail Project supports clients during the pretrial period, from the time of release to their last court appearance in which a final disposition is reached. Thus we began by examining the data for all clients (n=948) served from December 2018 through November 2021,¹¹ to determine if a rearrest for a new allegation occurred during their pretrial period.

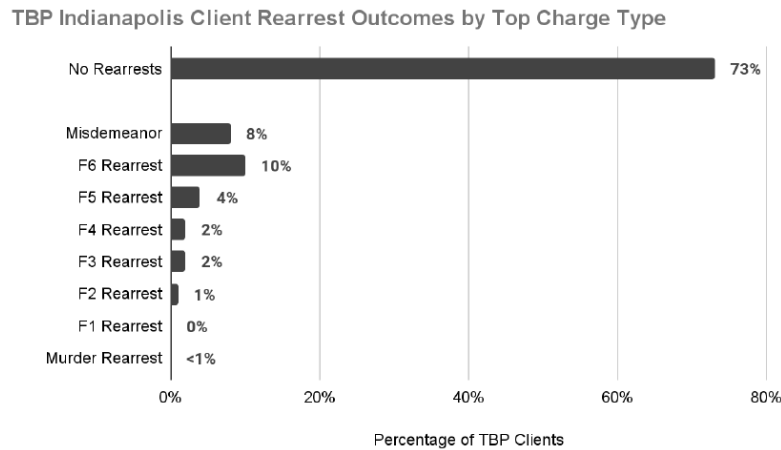
When examining rearrests during the pretrial period, the overwhelming majority of The Bail Project clients (73%) are not arrested for a new allegation.¹² For those that were rearrested for a new allegation, the majority were for

¹⁰ Initial focus was on determining client needs rather than tracking institutional follow-up. While consistent with the exigencies of rapid expansion, we recognize that more specific data on post-assessment follow-up is important. That said, because few or none of the services are rendered on-site or in-house, tracking can be complex.

¹¹ The period of December 2018 - November 2021 for this analysis reflects the time period that TBP was able to successfully harvest new case records for all of its clients from Indiana's Odyssey case management system, mycase.IN.gov. Client bailouts included in this analysis are all clients that TBP supported by posting bail for release, including those that were detained and held on a bond for a probation violation or other technical condition.

¹² A rearrest for a new allegation was determined by documenting each new case that was filed against a TBP client with a charge date between the time TBP posted bail and the date all TBP-supported cases "closed" (i.e., reached a disposition or forfeited a bond). For clients with cases still pending, we documented any rearrests with a new charge date through November 30, 2021. New allegation filings were pulled from mycase.IN.gov, where each time a new allegation is filed by the state of Indiana, a case will be opened and information related to the case is tracked. Multiple rearrests for a new allegation were aggregated as a single rearrest. See rearrest by occurrence for the percent of TBP clients that were rearrested for more than one new case filings during their pre-trial period. For rearrests with multiple charges, the date of the most recent charge was considered. Note, arrests for technical violations, such as an FTA, are not documented as new listings on Casenet, and therefore are not included in our analysis.

top charges that are misdemeanors or low-level felony offenses (F6 and F5).¹³ As the chart below shows, very few rearrests were for F4, F3, and F2 level felonies. No rearrests occurred for F1 felonies. Less than one percent of all The Bail Project rearrests were for allegations of murder.



Furthermore, when looking closely at the allegations within each charge type, the majority of the top charges for The Bail Project rearrests were non-violent in nature. The table below shows common charges for The Bail Project client rearrests at each charge type level.

Common Top Charges for Bail Project Client Rearrests

Misd.	Criminal trespassing; Driving with a suspended license
F6	Unlawful possession of a syringe; Theft where defendant has prior conviction for theft
F5	Operate a motor vehicle after forfeiture of license; Carrying a handgun without a license and with a prior conviction; Burglary of a non-dwelling without Injury.
F4	Unlawful possession of a firearm by serious violent felon
F3	Armed robbery
F2	Related to dealing drugs with 10 or more grams
F1	<i>No Bail Project clients were rearrested for F1 charges</i>

BAIL PROJECT CLIENTS WITH MULTIPLE REARRESTS FOR NEW ALLEGATIONS

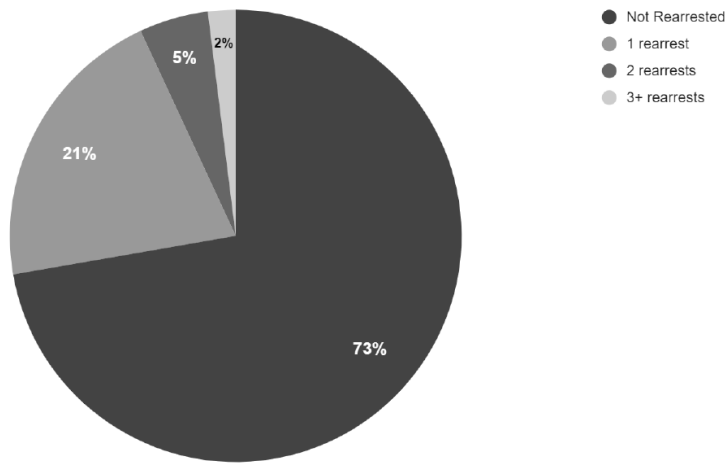
In looking at rearrests, it is vital to bear in mind that the national jail population trends show that jail churn – when an individual is arrested multiple times within a year – is a common occurrence, with *one in four individuals* being booked into jail more than once in the same year.¹⁴ Because jail churn is a common problem in local jails, we examined the occurrence of multiple rearrests for new allegations for The Bail Project clients.

As shared earlier, in the period examined, most The Bail Project clients (73%) are not rearrested for new allegations during their pretrial period, and thus were not cycling in and out of jail. Twenty-one percent were rearrested once during their pretrial period of the case(s) The Bail Project-assisted. Very few were rearrested more than once.

¹³ For clients with multiple rearrests for new allegations we calculated the rearrest with the highest level top charge.

¹⁴ “*Local Jails: The real scandal is the churn*,” Prison Policy Initiative, 2020.

TBP Indianapolis Client Rearrest Outcomes by Occurrence



Furthermore, of the clients rearrested more than one time during their pretrial period (n=58), 74% were rearrested for new allegations with top charges that were misdemeanors or lower-level felonies (F5 and F6).

In addition to jail churn, another factor in understanding rearrests during the pretrial period is case duration. In Marion County, the median case duration, from booking to case closure, for a Bail Project client is 268 days.¹⁵ While it is still early to determine the full-impact COVID-19 and resulting court closures have had on case duration, we estimate that cases pending during the pandemic may take at least 4 months longer to close than pre-pandemic cases. This longer case duration combined with the common occurrence of jail churn for all jail populations means the risk of recidivism during the pretrial period may be higher than previous rearrest baselines in the county.

COMPARATIVE REARREST ANALYSIS

As we began to dig more deeply into the questions surrounding rearrest numbers, the important questions we kept bumping into were: Is this normal? How does our performance stack up against other forms of release? Are we over or underperforming when compared to the commercial bail bond industry? Do charitable bail funds actually represent an increased risk to public safety or is the opposite the case?

After all, there is no question that those sworn to do justice and concerned about public safety have the right to make decisions armed with the best information available. To that end, it is important to see the work of The Bail Project not in isolation, but rather in the context of the other options available. That way, The Bail Project's performance can be compared directly to other release options, affording the judiciary, politicians, and the public a clear look at the risks and benefits of the available options.

Unfortunately, to our knowledge, Marion County courts and sheriff's office do not track or release information on recidivism during the pretrial period. Therefore, we conducted our own analysis using publicly available data. After all, only then could we have (and provide) a clear sense of both our absolute and our relative performance.

¹⁵ It should be noted that due to system processes, such as the time it takes for a Public Defender to be assigned a case in Marion County, clients may spend up to a month in jail with their case pending before TBP can support and post their bond. Data sources for case length include TBP internal client tracking for booking dates and Indiana CaseNet for close dates..

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SET SELECTION:

Our Data Set:

As described above, in response to the questions posed by the judiciary, we did an analysis of our rearrest rates looking at bailouts and rearrests from the beginning of operations through the end of November.

Analysis sample: comparison group

To conduct the analysis, we developed a sample of individuals that were released pretrial from Marion County jail¹⁶ and shared characteristics of Bail Project Clients, including charge severity profile as determined from booking and case data.¹⁷ After a deeper review,¹⁸ we then looked at individuals with the following:

- Time before pretrial release: individuals spent at least 3 days in jail.¹⁹
- The “pretrial period,” or time from release to case disposition, lasted at least 7 days.²⁰
- The individual had at least one pretrial case pending and at least one charge associated with the case included a felony.²¹

Based on the process and criteria, we were able to find a robust group consisting of 1,321 individuals.²² What follows is a comparative analysis of our performance and the comparison sample.

16 To develop a comparison group, several sources were utilized. Marion County jail booking data was provided by NYU's [Jail Data Initiative](#). We received data on 5,403 bookings for individuals detained between 3 and 60 days. For each booked person, we then initiated several state-wide searches via [Indiana's Odyssey case management system](#). To match case records to booking we matched the birthdate and all feasible combinations of given/surname components were included in a case search. All case numbers associated with each individual were documented, and any case filed after December 31, 2017 was fully downloaded (with details such as charges, disposition, etc).

17 Through matching booking and case data, we started with a dataset of 4,502 unique individuals, excluding TBP clients, that were released at least once. We then filtered that sample to individuals for whom we could match booking and case data and for whom a case was pending in that time period. This data set was then reviewed for additional analysis criteria to create the comparison group.

18 To ensure the comparison sample was appropriate, we ran t-tests on the following characteristics: Any arrests (measured by a new case being filed) in the two years previous to the booking; number of arrests in the two years previous to the booking; number of cases that were associated with the booking; age; gender; Black, female individuals.

19 Pretrial release after 3 days is the best proxy for having received a monetary bond. For the comparison group, data analyzed was limited to those who spent less than 60 days in jail before release.

20 Individuals whose cases were disposed within 7 days of jail release are often released because they plead guilty or had their cases dropped by the state. Those in our sample had at least one case associated with the booking pending at the time of pretrial release. The Marion County jail roster will identify the cases, through a unique “case number” for each case, by listing each case number related to a booking. Usually, this means that a new allegation was filed as a result of the booking. But it is also possible that the booking was a result of a Bench Warrant, due to a Failure to Appear or another pretrial violation, was issued while a case was pending.

21 As 90% of TBP clients had at least one felony charge during this time period, we decided this was an important comparison criteria. We also aimed to match, in the aggregate, felony charge types (levels).

22 While we were unable to see the specific release type in the public CaseNet records, the criteria selected would generally indicate that the release was due to the posting of monetary bonds.

PUBLIC SAFETY, RECIDIVISM, AND THE COURT'S QUESTIONS

While the hope remains that no one exposed to the criminal legal system will ever offend again, as we all know, the reality is often different. In the sections below, we will examine rearrest numbers, charge severity, and perhaps most crucially, the comparison numbers which serve to contextualize our performance.

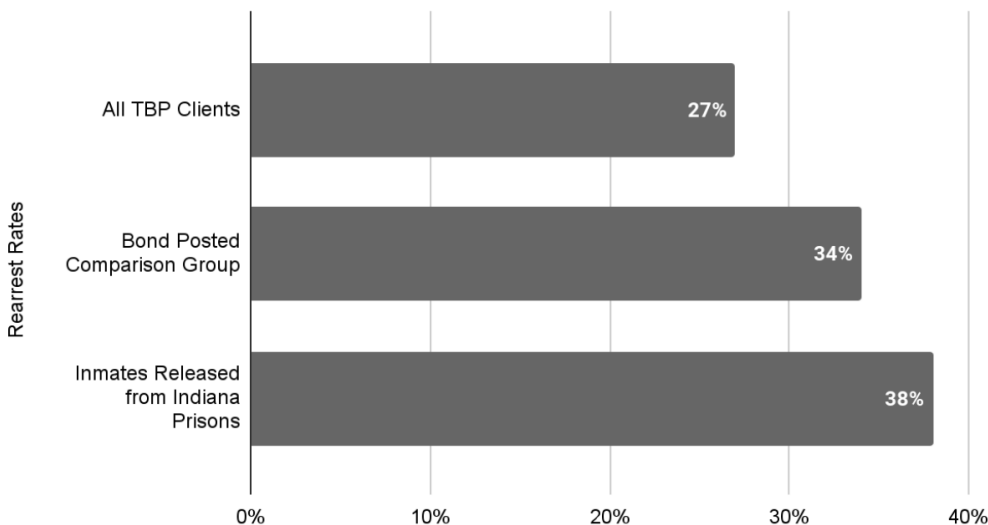
REARREST NUMBERS

Despite an orchestrated attempt by the for-profit bail bond industry to suggest that charitable bail funds pose a risk to public safety, the reality is very different. Statistical information makes clear that those released by The Bail Project actually re-offend at a rate that is **20 percent lower** than those released by the for-profit bail bond industry and/or private individuals, as well as at a significantly **lower** rate than those released from prison on parole.

Also, though we have opted to use the larger number of rearrests, it is important not to confuse rearrest rates with re-conviction rates, since more than 20 percent of The Bail Project rearrest charges are themselves dismissed. Nonetheless, in order to maintain statistical integrity, The Bail Project will be using rearrest rates, (again despite their seemingly higher numbers) as they are easier to correlate with the bond industry's performance.

And how did the commercial bail bond industry perform? An analysis of the comparison group revealed a rearrest rate among bond industry²³ cases of 34% far greater than those in The Bail Project's clients. Indeed, the Commercial Bail Bond Industry performs only slightly better in terms of rearrest rates than the 38.2 percent rearrest rate for those released from Indiana's prisons.²⁴

Rearrest Rates of Various Populations



²³ For the comparison analysis, rearrests for new allegations are defined as arrests in which a new allegation led to a new criminal case filing, as seen in [Indiana's Odyssey case management system](#). Additionally, the new allegations case must have been filed by December 31, 2021 and must have been filed after the jail release date associated with the booking. The highest charge associated with the new case must have been either a misdemeanor or felony.

²⁴ See, *Moving Forward*, IDOC's 202 Annual Report at page 9

As results above indicate, the reality is that Bail Project clients are rearrested 20 percent less often than those bailed out by the for-profit bail bond industry, despite having so little access to capital that without the intervention of a charitable bail fund, they would have remained incarcerated at taxpayer expense and with devastating consequences to themselves and their families.

THE HIGHLY CHARGED CASES INVOLVING MURDERS

Over the last six months or so, in the wake of several tragic events involving clients on behalf of whom The Bail Project posted bond, a small number of outlier cases have begun to receive enormous attention. In large part, this new focus has resulted from a coordinated multi-jurisdictional public relations effort by the commercial bail bond industry to curb charitable bail funds which they now perceive as a threat to their business model.

In Marion County and a growing number of other jurisdictions, the Bail Bond Industry has planted stories and raised questions about the operations of The Bail Project, all of which focus on the perceived risks posed by charitable bail funds being involved in pretrial release. Indeed, from dramatic news accounts to the court's questions, to demands by Senators Mike Leigh and Mitch McConnell asking the Government Accounting Office to investigate The Bail Project, The Bail Project (along with other charitable bail funds) is now very much under the microscope. Whether this coverage is fair is beside the point, whether it accurately implies some disparity in outcomes between charitable and for-profit bail posting entities, however, is very important.

While it should go without saying that The Bail Project takes every one of these cases seriously, and thinks deeply about and looks to learn lessons from every tragedy, it is also crucially important to remember that the data shows that while there have been problematic cases, The Bail Project continues to replicate high levels of success, despite the increasingly antagonistic rhetoric. Indeed, as the numbers below will clearly demonstrate, though The Bail Project has not yet engaged in a public tit for tat, these troubling incidents are by no means confined to The Bail Project cases.

On the contrary, there are dozens of instances just here in Marion County where judges released or the commercial bail bond industry posted a bond for someone subsequently arrested for murder while out on that bond.

In each of the cases below, the commercial bail bond industry posted a bond and subsequently, without any intervening cause, had those for whom they stood as surety arrested for murder. Despite this, in not a single one of the cases were the bonds called.

Take, for example, **Michael Wilson**. In early July of 2020, Mr. Wilson was arrested and charged with Felony 3 battery with serious bodily injury to a person less than 14 years old. It was his second serious felony abuse charge. At the time of the charge he was also on probation for charges involving drugs, theft and resisting arrest. On August 25th 2020, Judge John Boyce set a surety bond of \$80,000, for which **No Limit Bail Bonding Agency** agreed to stand as surety.

While out on the Bond posted by No Limit Bail Bonds, Mr. Wilson is alleged to have threatened several members of his family including his own father, at one point telling them they were lucky he didn't have his gun. Alas, according to the probable cause affidavit, that did not last long, and indeed, Mr. Wilson got his gun which he then used to shoot his father multiple times– including in the head– in front of several eyewitnesses. Arrested, charged

with murder, kidnapping, strangulation, and domestic battery in the presence of a child under 16 years old, and having clearly violated the conditions of his release, Mr. Jarrett was subsequently held without bond. It does not appear that No Limit Bail Bonds was ever asked to remit or forfeit the full amount of the bond they posted.

Or consider the case of **Jashawn Jones**, charged with two counts of Felony 5 Domestic abuse. Out on a bond set by Judge Grant Hawkins, and posted by **Woods Bail Bonds Inc.** Mr. Jones, it appears, opted not to abide by the protective order issued by Judge Hawkins. Instead, on April 7th, 2021 he allegedly went to a home on Draycott Avenue where the mother of his two-year-old daughter and the subject of the aforesaid protective order was staying.

It was in that house that the officers who responded found a shot-out window, bullet holes in a wall, and the subject of that protective order, a woman referred to as “B.B” with a graze wound from a bullet. Not far from her, a man named Steven Banks lay bloodied on the floor from multiple gunshot wounds to the head and torso.

Interviewed about the situation, B.B told the police that Mr. Jones, angry about a custody issue, had sent video messages to both her and Mr. Banks, in which he threatened to kill them both—a threat, that at least in the case of Mr. Banks, he made good on. Cell phone records place Mr. Jones at the scene of the crime.

Arrested, charged with Murder, and having clearly violated the conditions of his release, Mr. Jarrett was subsequently held without bond. It does not appear that Woods Bail Bonds was ever asked to remit or forfeit the full amount of the bond for which they stood as surety.

Then there is **Jahion Jarrett**, charged one September day with Felony 3 Armed Robbery, Auto Theft, and possession of a firearm. Upon reviewing his case, Judge Jennifer Springer set a surety bond at \$40,000 a sum for which **Roach Bail Bonds** saw fit to stand as surety, the result: less than a year later, on July 9th, 2021, near a storage barn, behind a church, a Lyft driver shot once in the head, his pockets turned inside out, his car taken. Arrested in that car, several days later, after leading law enforcement on a high-speed chase, was Mr. Jarrett, a GPS monitor still on his leg, his cell phone records placing him at the scene of the crime.

Arrested, charged with murder, and having clearly violated the conditions of his release, Mr. Jarrett was held without bond. Yet again, it does not appear that Roach Bail Bonds was asked to remit or forfeit the full amount of the bond for which they stood as surety.

There are others. Many others, including *dozens of additional murders*. In case after case, the commercial bail bond industry has posted bonds for people who have gone on to commit murders and other serious violent crimes, and yet, there has been no hue or cry, no investigations into the Commercial Bail Bond Industry, no demands for regulation, or even, it appears, requests to actually surrender the full amount of the bond—for which it is universally agreed, they are responsible.

No. Instead, there has been a granular focus on The Bail Project and the cases in which those bailed out by a not-for-profit have gone the way of so many commercial bail bond cases. This is not what-about-ism. This is not some attempt at turn-about. It is an assertion that risk is everywhere in our system, that everyone assumes some of that risk and that it is axiomatic that not every case will turn out the way we all hope. That goes for The Bail Project, but it also goes for judges, family members who scrimp and save to post bonds for their loved ones, and it goes for the commercial bail bond industry. Indeed, The Bail Project has already identified over three dozen instances in which those released by courts, or bonded out by the Commercial Bail Bond Industry have gone on to be arrested

for murder.

Should we examine each case in which something goes awry? Of course we should, and at The Bail Project, we do. And although these cases represent less than 4 tenths of one percent of the cases in which we have intervened, because they continue to drive the narrative and effect policy, they are important and instructive. That is why the exegesis below, which examines each of the cases that have been used in the press and in the political sphere to whip up concerns about our operations, is so important.

CASE STUDIES OF HIGH-PROFILE BAIL PROJECT CASES

As we made clear on the very day we committed to commencing operations in Indianapolis, The Bail Project values transparency, learning and data, and has always aimed to use data to establish and maintain best practices and learn from any mistakes. As we have said repeatedly, every case that doesn't turn out well is troubling, and irrespective of external demands, we assiduously try to learn from every problematic case. That said, as we have tried to assess what went wrong, it is clear that 1. Much of the public narrative around our operations is not justified by the facts, and 2. That in almost every one of The Bail Project's concerning cases, whether it was Judges reducing bonds, or Commercial Bond Agencies stepping in to aid in release, multiple actors in the system, assessed the case risk in the same way as The Bail Project did.

TRAVIS ANTONIO LANG

One of the more notorious cases and one that has received extensive press coverage and a great deal of public scrutiny involves Travis Antonio Lang, who was charged with murder in connection with the death of Dylan McGinnis. Headlines concerning Mr. Lang's case blared "2nd man accused of murder after leaving jail with Bail Project's help" and "The Bail Project Catches Heat After Release of Travis Lang who Then Murdered Man in Bad Drug Deal" while Instagram posts and other press accounts of the killing garnered hundreds of angry comments directed at The Bail Project. Journalists peppered the Mayor with questions concerning our operations. Left entirely out of the discussion was the actual timeline of events, and who actually posted the bonds that freed Mr. Lang. To be clear, this is not some attempt to shift blame, rather it is an important explanation of how The Bail Project operates, how it made the decisions it made, and what other systemic actors were involved. That The Bail Project is the only entity to be publicly attacked for what happened here says far more about the politics of bail than it does about our decision-making.

Travis A Lang was referred by his public defender, Bobbie Sierzputowski, on 12/31/20. Mr. Lang, who had already been in jail for over a month, was facing three cases. After interviewing him and having conversations with his family who could not afford to pay the Bail Bond Company the full amount they were requesting, The Bail Project agreed to post bail for the two less serious cases (Felony 6 level) cases. We did so on January 10th, 2021.

The next day, Barbara Roach of Roach Bail Bonds, posted the \$15,000 surety bond that had been set in the more serious Felony 5 burglary charge by Judge Mark Stoner.

Some seven months later, on July 9th of 2021, Mr. Lang was charged with Controlled Substances Misdemeanor. A \$150 cash bond was set by Judge James Osborn. The Bail Project declined to post that bail, and it was paid four days later by a family member or friend.

Finally, ten months, and two bonds removed from The Bail Project's intervention, Mr. Lang was charged with murder. He has remained in custody since. The record contains no evidence that the \$15,000 surety bond posted by the Roach Bail Bond agency was ever demanded or surrendered.

An examination of our decision-making reveals that Mr. Lang had strong ties to his family, that the charges for which we posted bail were the less serious ones, and that with his public defender, vouching for him, his family behind him, and a commercial bond agency willing to undertake the risk, we believed him to be in a good position to return to court as needed and not reoffend.

As should be clear, Mr. Lang was aided by family members, by The Bail Project, and by Barbara Roach Bail Bond agency. And though it was The Bail Project that was taken to task in public, it was actually Roach Bail Bond agency that stood as surety for the most serious of his cases, and both Roach and a family member or friend, posted bonds *after* The Bail Project declined to do so.

DAVID LEE SPARKS

At the time of our intervention Mr. Sparks was charged with Dealing in Methamphetamine and Possession of Methamphetamine. While Judge Jennifer Harrison originally set bail as a \$40,000 surety bond, On October 3rd of 2019, Judge Harrison reduced the bond to \$4,000 cash, at which point, his public defender contacted The Bail Project. Five days later, after an interview and investigation, The Bail Project posted Mr. Sparks's bail.

About four months later, Mr. Sparks was charged with a Misdemeanor Carrying a Handgun Without a License in Johnson County. No bond was issued, and he remained in custody until a plea agreement was reached with the State. He was sentenced on June 4th of 2020 to 238 days with time served credit for 119 days. After being released on this case, in October of 2020, Mr. Sparks failed to appear on our case, and a warrant was issued. Four days after his failure to appear, Mr. Sparks was again taken into custody on the warrant.

Less than two weeks later, on October 22nd, 2020, Judge Harrison once again released Mr. Sparks. Unbeknownst to her, or The Bail Project, it was during this time, that Mr. Sparks and two other individuals, allegedly committed a murder inside the jail.

In November, just a few weeks after being released by Judge Harrison, Mr. Sparks was again arrested on Felony 6 level charges. Though a \$2,000 bond was set by Judge Springer, The Bail Project declined to post, and Mr. Sparks remained in custody until a plea agreement was reached. That deal? The State dismissed the Confinement, Strangulation, and Domestic Battery charges and Mr. Sparks was sentenced to 365 days with credit for 5 days served and 355 days suspended.

It was not until 18 months and three intervening arrests later, that Mr. Sparks was ultimately charged with the murder that took place prior to his release by Judge Harrison some eight months earlier.

Once again, a closer examination of the facts reveals the complex systemic forces at play in our system. While it is true that The Bail Project did indeed post bond, it is wildly unfair to suggest that it was The Bail Project's intervention, rather than the intervening actions of the court or prosecutor that somehow undermined public safety. Here again, and true to our word that we would not throw other systemic players under the bus, we have made no public statements and issued no press releases concerning the chronology, but it is crucial that the court system understand the timeline involved.

ANTAWAIN BOSTIC

Originally charged in December of 2019 with Felony 2 Dealing, Felony 6 Possession and Felony 5 Carrying a Handgun Mr. Bostic's bond was originally a \$200,000 surety bond, which The Bail Project never even considered posting. However, after over a year of confinement, apparently given the procedural posture of the case, in January of 2021 Magistrate Patrick Murphy reduced the bond to \$25,000 cash. With the bail still unposted, some two weeks later, Magistrate Murphy again reviewed the bail, this time converting the bond to \$2,500 cash bond with Home Detention. It was at this point that, with the urging of his public defender and support from his family, The Bail Project intervened, posting the bail on January 21st.

While in jail on the drug charge, Mr. Bostic was also charged with Felony 5 Criminal Recklessness, Felony 5 Battery by means of a Deadly Weapon, and Felony 5 Carrying a Handgun w/o a License from an incident that had occurred nearly a year earlier. On these new charges, a \$15,000 surety bond was set by Judge James Osborn. While the Bail Project did not post on these charges either, Woods Bail Bonds saw fit to stand as surety, and the bond was paid on January 20th of 2021.

Some four months later, Mr. Bostic was charged with murder. That murder occurred in December of 2020—nearly a year BEFORE The Bail Project ever posted any bail for Mr. Bostic.

Once again, though The Bail Project includes the case here in an abundance of caution, but because the crime occurred long *before* any intervention on our part, but remained unknown because of a long-delayed arrest, we do not count this as a murder rearrest. That said, Mr. Bostic's story does shed some light on another confounding problem: that of delayed policing, and the failure to promptly investigate and bring charges.

JAYLEN SMITH

In mid-August of 2019, Mr. Smith was charged with Felony 5 Dangerous Possession of a Firearm and a misdemeanor Carrying a Handgun Without a License. On 8/22/19 Judge Barbara Crawford ordered Mr. Smith to be released from custody and placed on Electronic Monitoring. Some four months later, Mr. Smith accepted a plea offer and was sentenced to Home Detention Electronic Monitoring.

After two months of house arrest, Mr. Smith was charged with Felony 5: Possession of a Firearm Felony 6: Escape for intentionally violates a home detention order, Felony 6: Resisting Law Enforcement and the Misdemeanor of Leaving the Scene of an Accident and Operating a Motor Vehicle without a License. Because of the rearrest, a violation was also filed. For the new charges, Judge James Snyder set a \$7,500 10% bond. For the violation, Judge Shatrese set a \$7,500 cash bond. While Mr. Smith's family could afford to bail him out on the new charges, they could not afford to post the bond for the probation violation. In a collective effort, and with strong assurances from the family that they would look after Mr. Smith, the family and The Bail Project posted Mr. Smith's bond with the family securing his release on the new charges, and The Bail Project posting the bail for his probation violations.

Eight months later, Mr. Smith was arrested and charged with Murder. The Smith case has generated a great deal of consideration and thought within the organization and a review has taken place to determine whether there are lessons to be learned. While it is clear now that the several firearm allegations probably should have elevated the inquiry, without the benefit of hindsight, the facts on the ground, especially the

deep involvement of the family and the decision to impose home confinement in the first instance, made it appear that posting Mr. Smith's bond on the probation violation was within the scope of what we believed to be reasonable.

MARCUS GARVIN

Marcus Garvin was another case that generated an enormous amount of press attention, almost all of it highly critical of The Bail Project. Fox News did several pieces, including one in which their headlines blared "Indianapolis donated \$150K to group that bailed out man accused of killing girlfriend." Dozens of other media outlets, including lawofficer.com also piled on, amplifying that message so much that it appears that Senators Mitch McConnell and Mike Leigh took notice, ultimately requesting that the Government Accounting Office investigate The Bail Project.

Obviously, given all this, The Bail Project has looked closely at the case to ascertain what, if any, signs existed at the time of the bail out that might indicate a future problem. As shown below, they were few and far between.

Three days after Christmas in 2020, Mr. Garvin was charged with Felony 5 battery by means of a deadly weapon and Felony 5 battery for a stabbing that occurred at his place of work. A surety bond was set in the amount of \$30,000, a sum The Bail Project declined to post. However, approximately two weeks later, Judge Shatrese Flowers reduced the bond to \$1,500 cash with a special condition mandating the use of a GPS device.

After receiving a referral from Mr. Garvin's public defender, The Bail Project's local team of Bail Advocates reviewed his legal history, interviewed Mr. Garvin to gather information, assess the likelihood that he would return to court, and to identify his social service's needs, if any. Looking into his background, the team determined that Mr. Garvin's only prior involvement in the criminal legal system was a decade ago when he was charged with a misdemeanor battery in 2012 and driving under the influence in 2010/2011. The fact that he was out of the system for a full decade was significant. The team also determined (and verified) that Mr. Garvin had a stable place to live with family –as well as a plan to return to court to resolve his case. Though the case was serious, the team weighed heavily the court's decision to reduce bail as it suggested both that the court wanted to facilitate his release, and/or that the original charges may not have been fully supportable. Finally, the team made inquiries as to Mr. Garvin's support system speaking to both his mother and his partner (the eventual victim), both of whom did not believe he represented a danger to himself or others.

After concluding the investigation some 10 days later, The Bail Project posted bail for Mr. Garvin. Though Mr. Garvin did make his court dates as required, approximately eight months later, he was arrested and charged with Murder.

Without question, this is one of those cases where there was a terrible outcome, but as we have discussed throughout this memo, there is risk inherent in the pre-trial release system, and the real question is what can we do to minimize it. While it would be wonderful to find easy lessons or fast fixes, unfortunately, in cases like this, they simply don't exist. As much as we understand the tragedy of what happened here, we cannot find in our review and in the larger context of our performance an institutional failure here.

DEONTA WILLIAMS

Finally, there is one last case that straddles the divide. Not technically a murder case, but nonetheless, one that has generated intense public scrutiny and controversy due to the allegations concerning law enforcement, we have opted to include Mr. Williams here in our analysis and discussion.

As with Mr. Lang and Mr. Garvin, Mr. William's case was weaponized in the press in order to suggest that The Bail Project was a threat to public safety. On December 2nd, 2021, WIBC mobile news posted an article declaring:

"SUSPECT WHO AMBUSHED IMPD OFFICERS GOT ASSISTANCE FROM BAIL PROJECT INDY"

The piece begins:

The sack of crap who stabbed two IMPD officers this week was out on bail with the assistance of Bail Project Indy.

Court records show that Deonta Williams, the aforementioned sack of crap, admitted he intentionally ambushed and stabbed two IMPD officers because he owed a large medical bill he couldn't pay and took it out on the officers.

He hoped to kill one officer and get his gun and then be killed by the other.

Thankfully, both officers survived the attack. Regrettably, so did Williams.

For you Bail Project Indy trivia lovers, this is officially the THIRD TIME this year that your taxpayer dollars helped free someone who went on to commit or attempt murder.

The coverage was not limited to WIBC. Multiple outlets published stories about the case. And while few were quite as breathless or hyperbolic, nearly all either intimated or overtly alleged that The Bail Project operations were contributing to a decline in public safety. Given all that, it would not be surprising if the hew and cry over Mr. William's case contributed, some two weeks later, to the Superior Court publicly suspending its relationship with The Bail Project.

As with the cases above, however, a closer look at the timeline and circumstances is, once again, quite revealing. In January of 2021, Mr. Williams was charged with an F4 Burglary of a dwelling. His bond, which was initially a \$25,000 surety bond was not something The Bail Project would consider. However, some two months later, on 3/08/21 Judge Grant Hawkins reduced that bond to \$750 and a requirement of Electronic Monitoring. After a referral and investigation, just under a month later, The Bail Project posted the \$750.

In late July, some three months after The Bail Project posted the \$750 bail, Mr. Williams was arrested and charged with Misdemeanor Criminal Mischief for an offense that took place some 10 days earlier. Given the nature of the case, Magistrate Stanley Kroh released Mr. Williams on his own recognizance. Despite the angry press coverage, this was the release that immediately preceded the attempted murder allegations.

After his release by Magistrate Kroh, four more months went by. At this point, the 20-year-old Mr. Williams was living in a homeless shelter and, though unbeknownst to The Bail Project or the Court was beginning to show signs of a brewing mental health crisis which came to a head in early December 2021, when Mr. Williams, reportedly attempting a "suicide by cop" by attacking and stabbing two members of the Indianapolis law enforcement community. According to news reports, while living in a shelter and struggling to get by, Mr. Williams had received a large medical bill he could not pay, which seems to have

triggered a crisis. Arrested on the scene, Mr. Williams was charged with two counts of Felony 1 Attempted Murder, and held without bond. By Magistrate Peggy Hart, who also immediately ordered the bond posted by The Bail Project to be forfeited.²⁵

Mr. Williams' case, like all the other serious ones, has prompted a detailed review of the decision-making process. And while it is the case that the charges themselves are on the high side of what The Bail Project usually considers, the revised bond amount set by the judge led us to believe that the case might not have been as serious as initially charged. That said, the organization aspires to have a grasp of our clients' needs and status, and in this case, our failure to perceive the decline in Mr. Williams' mental health, is a genuine issue. During the pendency of the case in which The Bail Project posted his bail, Mr. Williams did appear in court on three separate occasions, and though there was one FTA, it was because Mr. Williams was in the hospital, and the warrant associated with that court date was removed. In addition to the successful court appearances, The Bail Project had at least one additional check in with his mother, who was serving as his primary point of contact.

As we have reviewed our actions in this case, we believe that the initial decision to post bail was well within what we believe to be appropriate, our follow-up, however is where we see a need for improvement. Had we given more attention to Mr. William's visit to the hospital we might have discovered that he was experiencing signs of mental distress. (After the incident we learned that Mr. Williams had expressed thoughts of suicide when he visited the hospital). Certainly, it is possible that even with significantly closer contact we could have remained either entirely unaware of the issues and their severity, or unable to guide Mr. Williams into appropriate treatment. Nonetheless, better follow-up would have given us a better chance to perceive a problem before it became one.

25 While The Bail Project fully understands that forfeiture of our bail is a possibility when our clients fail to comply with the terms of their release, it is notable, almost to the point of shocking, that the Commercial Bail Bond Industry seems not to be held to the same standard. Indeed, thus far in our ongoing investigation, we have not found a single instance in which, no matter how egregious the non-compliance, any judge in Indianapolis has required a commercial bail bond agency to remit the full amount for which they stood surety. As our investigation into this issue has only begun, it is entirely possible that such forfeitures have occurred, that said, to date, they appear to be somewhere between vanishingly rare and non-existent.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this report will allow a more honest and data-driven appraisal of our activities in Indianapolis than has been propagated by the press coverage of a small number of outlier events.

Our intentions now, are as they have been all along: to help the poor; to offer solutions that enhance return to court, while gathering evidence of best practices for pretrial support; and to advocate with stakeholders for comprehensive reforms that make our intervention no longer necessary. It is disheartening to find ourselves the target of legislation and a public campaign to limit or outright ban the free assistance and services we provide low-income Hoosiers. It is even more disheartening to see those who truly understand the complexities of these issues, those with whom we have, in good faith partnered and protected, turn away from this important work rather than leading with reason and nuance in an attempt to elevate the discourse.

At the end of the day, we do this work because we believe that reliance on wealth in the exercise of justice corrupts the process, undermines its legitimacy, and ultimately costs us all. We offer this analysis with the sincere hope that it will provide all of the necessary information to aid you in judging the value of our work on its merits, rather than the politics that surround it.

APPENDIX



March 7, 2022

To the Honorable Judge Amy Jones:

I am writing this letter to express my support and admiration for the Bail Project and what the Bail Project brings to the underprivileged communities of our city. Anytime you give hope to a hopeless situation or family in need; that is what community work/service looks like. This community needs work and service. That small glimmer of hope/support is often the catalyst which induces growth and change within the individual or family assisted.

When you are incarcerated and do not have the financial resources one needs in order to defend oneself in such matters; a program like the Bail Project is a God Send. In this country you are supposedly innocent until proven guilty. Yet if you are poor, fit into one of the minority sub-groups or financially underprivileged, you may as well be guilty from the day you are arrested. The effects of even brief incarceration can have dire effects on a family and it's stability as a whole.

Sometimes the difference between having a job and being able to support one's family can come down to a \$1,000 or \$2,000 bond. If you're stuck in jail for two months awaiting pre-trial conference over a \$1500 bond, then you have the potential to lose everything. But with a program like this, after a rigorous screening process, if you qualify you are able to get the assistance that you need to get back out, continue to work and support your family and be in position to defend yourself while still taking care of your life responsibilities.

On the flipside, without a program like the Bail Project, some innocent members of our community sit in jail 60/90 days over minimal bonds and lose everything; only to later be vindicated or have the case dismissed for lack of evidence or a violation of due process. This program, in our opinion, (I'm speaking as a member of this community) is a great way to balance the scales of justice for those who don't realize or know that those scales exist. They are only used to injustice coming from the Justice system. This began to balance that in the minds of our community. I beg of you to look at the greater good and not the lesser evil in the results being produced by this phenomenal organization and it's leadership.

Sincerely,

Shane Shepherd
Founder/President of Big Homies Of America

BIG HOMIES OF AMERICA | 1234 W 26TH ST | INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46208

bhoa.presidentshepherd@gmail.com



March 7, 2022

Honorable Judge Amy Jones
Marion County Criminal Court
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Judge Jones:

RecycleForce is an employment social enterprise with the two-fold mission of recycling end-of-life electronics and providing transitional employment and industry-recognized training for people reentering the community after committing a crime. Among those we serve are those released on bail.

RecycleForce is well known to the Indianapolis criminal justice community – from the courts, to community correction, parole and probation to IMPD and the Sheriff's office – we are known to the community as an organization that can provide immediate employment to those deemed medium to high risk to commit a new crime. We employ and serve 400 plus high risk people per year. People are referred to us by the criminal justice system and we pay the person referred \$11 per hour and help the referred person to adhere to the requirements the courts have placed on them.

In working with pre-trial clients – we have never received a referral from a traditional bail bondsman. While traditional bail becomes involved with those we serve – they have never contacted us – or in any way tried to work with us to make sure the client they have bailed under the traditional methods have services to be successful and return to court. The Bail Project on the other hand works closely with us and tries to help us help the client they have referred. The Bail Project is a very important program for Indianapolis and an organization that those interested in public safety should support.

Bail is a constitutionally protected right for all citizens. The Bail Project is an important service that should not be attacked, but instead should be a group we work with to improve their services to those who are in need of same. Public safety in Indianapolis can be enhanced by supporting the Bail Project.

Sincerely,

Gregg Keesling
President



Reentry That Works!

March 9, 2022

To Whom May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the good work that The Bail Project, under the direction of David Gaspar, is doing in the Indianapolis community. I first met Mr. Gaspar and became familiar with The Bail Project while working with the Marion County Reentry Coalition a few years ago. At the time I was the Indianapolis Branch Manager of Allegiance Staffing, and we successfully assisted many Bail Project clients in securing meaningful employment.

Last year I joined the staff of UNITE INDY, a faith based nonprofit organization headquartered in Indianapolis. UNITE INDY fights the root cause of poverty, giving people in need a hand up by providing job preparation training, establishing direct connections to employers, and empowering people to create their own pathway to success.

We have developed a laser focus on helping those returning from long term incarceration secure meaningful employment, and as such we support any organization, such as The Bail Project, that works to address the barriers faced by those looking to reenter the community as productive, law-abiding citizens.

R. Scott Whiting

Vice President

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“Preaching Jesus Everywhere We Go”

Bishop John T. Smith, M.Div.
Senior Pastor/Teacher

Mr. David Gaspar

First, I would like to thank you for your commitment and dedication to the city of Indianapolis and the amazing program that you lead here in our community, The Bail Project.

I, like many other citizens in the city of Indianapolis appreciate and fully support the Bail Project as it offers hope and provides opportunities for men and women to receive second chances when they make a mistake, a bad decision, and demonstrate errors in judgment.

This community needs the Bail Project because it plays a vital role in creating a sense of trust in the system. It is my belief that many lives have been positively impacted because of the Bail Project. Family relationships have been greatly improved, children have reunited with their parents minimizing their level of trauma and stress.

I am aware of some of the situations where individuals were released and committed additional crimes and I pray for the families who have lost loved ones to violence and my heart goes out to those families in mourning. I also believe that most of the persons who have received assistance from the Bail Project are very appreciative for the second chance. The Bail Project has been impactful since its introduction to our community by addressing issues that affect systemic issues such as jail overcrowding, disproportionate high bails for those who could not afford bail, making it possible for individuals who have problems in our criminal justice system the opportunity for fairness and equality seeking relief from the stress and hardships of pretrial incarceration.

Bishop John T. Smith, M.Div.
Senior Pastor

“Where we Glorify God without Compromise”



March 7, 2022

Honorable Judge Amy Jones
Marion County Criminal Court
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Judge Jones:

Indiana Addiction Issues Coalition is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for those with substance use disorders (SUD) through advocacy, education, and policy. We educate community leaders, sit on boards, and provide testimony on topics that impact those with SUD. Part of our goal is to provide information that SUD is a chronic health condition (not moral failing), treatment works, and recovery is possible. We are also a statewide recovery community organization that delivers recovery coaching to those with mental health concerns and SUD. Our Indiana Recovery Network delivers peer support to all 92 counties through 20 different recovery organizations.

We have worked with the Bail Project for several years as a resource for the folks they serve to help get them connected to recovery resources. From our first meeting, Bail Project main concern brought to us was to ensure that folks weren't merely bailed out of jail, but truly helped and supported in all areas of deficit. We are proud to be able to help those in criminal justice system get connected to recovery supports.

As you know all too well, those with addiction issues, often have criminal history. Our jails are full of people with MH and addiction concerns, most estimate the vast majority have at least one. One of our societal challenges is deciding who is sick and needing of treatment and who are we scared of. Those decisions are well beyond our scope, but we feel the need to highlight many people in jail for addiction related issues are only incarcerated because they lack the funding to post bond, not because risk assessment. We want our community to be safe, but we also don't want people who are sick with the disease of addiction to be stuck in jail because of financial reason instead of safety concerns. The Bail Project has been a good partner in this regard and every interaction we have had involves making sure their clients have access to all the support that is needed.

Please feel free to reach out to me anytime at 317-418-3195.

Sincerely,

Brandon George

Brandon George
Executive Director
Indiana Addiction Issues Coalition
bgeorge@mhai.net