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**Dane County Criminal Justice Council Partners with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation and Researchers from Harvard University to Improve Criminal Justice Outcomes**

***Dane County selected for unique capacity building and study!***

DANE COUNTY- Today, the Dane County Criminal Justice Council (CJC) announced a new partnership with one of the nations' leading criminal justice funders--The Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) -- to reform the County's pretrial assessment process. It also announced that researchers from Harvard University would study the efficacy of these reforms.

The Dane County CJC and Pretrial Reform subcommittee has been reviewing best pretrial practices nation-wide for over two years, including representing the State of Wisconsin at the National Association of State Courts Pretrial Reform conference in 2014. National best practices suggest jurisdictions need a fair and accurate way to predict the likelihood of a defendant either offending while on pretrial release or failing to appear in court.

Evidence based assessment tools have been shown as better predictors of pretrial success than professional discretion alone. Dane County will be trained and authorized to utilize the Public Safety Assessment (PSA), a risk assessment tool developed by LJAF that helps judges make accurate, efficient, and evidence-based decisions about which defendants should be detained prior to trial and which can be safely released.

Studies have demonstrated that even a short stay in jail before trial is correlated with a greater likelihood of future criminal activity. In fact, low risk defendants held in jail for two to three days were 39 percent more likely to be arrested for a new crime than low risk defendants who were released on the first day. Additionally, the solutions crafted by community members and criminal justice stakeholders in the recently released "Investigating Solutions to Racial Disparities and Mental Health Challenges in the Dane County Jail and throughout Dane County's Criminal Justice System" request an improved pretrial system.

The CJC is also excited to announce that Dane County was selected by LJAF to partner with researchers at Harvard University on a multi-year study evaluating the impact of the PSA. The study will assess whether providing the PSA to judicial officials making pretrial release decision leads to positive outcomes both for the community and the criminal justice system overall.

"The opportunity to embrace innovation our criminal justice system with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation-- coupled with Harvard studying our results--is indeed a win-win for Dane County" said

County Board Chair Sharon Corrigan. “Our vision for a fair and just criminal justice system will be enhanced by this front-end effort.”

As Dane County begins use of the PSA tool, Dane County Sheriff’s Office continues to note the structural problems within our current jails. “I am interested in safely lowering the jail population—and at the same time creating a safe space for those that have to be incarcerated” , said Sheriff Dave Mahoney. “Partnerships with national leaders like the Laura and John Arnold Foundation and Harvard University move us forward as we seek criminal justice reforms.”

“ It is critical that we work to address conscious and unconscious bias and the root causes of involvement in the criminal justice system”, said County Executive Joe Parisi, who chairs the CJC. “We are actively addressing the root causes of criminal justice involvement with early life strategies. Working with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation at the pretrial phase will help to reduce the collateral consequences of jail for many of our residents.”

Use of an evidence-based, validated assessment tool is key to diverting those that should not be held in jail, thereby mitigating the collateral consequences of jail time on the individual , and county dollars on jail stays. The process of developing key partnerships requires the criminal justice leaders to work together toward a common goal.

District Attorney Ismael Ozanne noted, ““Focusing on early intervention strategies will fundamentally change our criminal justice system. My office is committed to focusing on early intervention and diversion where possible. I look forward to working with our criminal justice partners to achieve more equity and transparency.”

The use of a validated pretrial risk assessment tool in pretrial release decision making can minimize not only time in pretrial detention, but also the likelihood and length of incarceration time after sentencing, according to The Pretrial Justice Institute. The Dane County CJC will collaborate for a successful launch of the PSA tool and will monitor the process as it evolves.

“The use of a validated pretrial assessment should lead to the reduction of negative impacts of the criminal justice system on individuals, and their families. Our new partnership with LJAF and Harvard University are key first steps to overall system improvements. “ said Clerk of Courts Carlo Esqueda.

Twenty-nine jurisdictions—from major cities to entire states—are implementing the Public Safety Assessment (PSA) tool. This includes three entire states—Arizona, Kentucky, and New Jersey—as well as three of the largest cities in the country—Charlotte, Chicago, and Phoenix. Early indications have shown that the tool can help judges increase public safety while reducing jail populations.

Matt Alsdorf, interim vice president of LJAF’s Criminal Justice Initiative said, “We are delighted to have the opportunity to work with Dane County to implement the PSA, and we look forward to seeing the results of the Harvard research into the efficacy of the PSA analysis in the pretrial process.” LJAF is a private foundation that is working to address the nation’s most pressing and persistent challenges using evidence-based, multi-disciplinary approaches.

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Attachment: Letter of Support from all CJC members to the Laura and John Arnold Foundation.