



PAD opposes the proposal to expand the Fulton County jail through a lease of the Atlanta City Detention Center and urges the City of Atlanta and Fulton County to advance solutions that will immediately address jail overcrowding without undermining our collective efforts to transform our local criminal justice system.

Changing how we as a community respond to quality-of-life issues, behavioral health challenges, and homelessness is not an easy task. Simply put, it's culture change. But we are doing it. Atlanta was the first city in the country to offer residents the ability to call the 311 non-emergency line to request a non-police response to these concerns. In the last six months, PAD teams responded to 717 of these calls. Each one of these represent a call that did not go to 911, a call that did not result in police response, and an interaction that did not result in a jail booking. **Alternate response is an immediate solution to jail overcrowding.**

So far this year, 176 people who could have been booked and detained at the Fulton County jail were instead diverted to PAD. This means that in the last six months there were 176 people who did not end up in the Fulton County jail because of activities related to homelessness, to poverty, to substance use, and to disturbances due to mental health crises. **Diversion is an immediate solution to jail overcrowding.**

But there were many more people who were arrested and booked into the Fulton County jail that could have been diverted. According to Atlanta Police Department data, there were 312 people in just the last six months who were arrested and booked into the Fulton County jail during PAD operating hours for diversion-eligible charges. That's 10 more people every week joining the thousands of people in the overcrowded, awful conditions of the Fulton County jail who could have been diverted. **If used consistently, diversion could be an even more impactful solution to jail overcrowding.**

Mayor Dickens and the Atlanta City Council have supported the expansion of policing alternatives and diversion through PAD. Just last week, Atlanta City Council authorized tripling PAD's funding to expand our Harm Reduction Response and Care Navigation teams, with the express purpose of reducing "the number of incarcerated persons in overcrowded prisons or jails." The Administration has joined with Fulton County to attract millions of dollars to the Center for Diversion & Services, the 24-7 alternative to jail that is slated to open in 2024 with the leadership of the Fulton County Justice and Mental Health Taskforce, Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, Grady Hospital, PAD, Georgia Justice Project, Partners for HOME and many others. **The purpose is to reduce the number of people who are in jail because they are struggling with mental health, drugs or alcohol.**

If our City and County leadership feels moved to respond to the conditions at the Fulton County jail today, PAD and our partners are ready to do more together. Let's roll up our sleeves and figure out who is confined at Fulton County jail right now, what their stories are, and how we can most effectively resolve their cases. Let's review every new booking and divert then and there if the person is eligible. Let's advocate together to the system actors--whether it's the prosecutors, the public defenders or the courts--to allow people the dignity of responding quickly to the charges against them as well as not holding them in jail simply for inability to pay or lack of a treatment bed. **Let's take action that provides immediate solutions to overcrowding.**

The decision to lease ACDC to Fulton County is not about a building. It's about whether our City and County leadership understands what it takes to truly transform our approach to public safety. The jailing business will never be the pathway to getting out of the jailing business. We call on our partners at the City of Atlanta and Fulton County to stay the course. Let's keep choosing the solutions that honor our common humanity and move us closer to a city that is safer for all.