WHO WE ARE

The Lancaster Bail Fund (LBF) is a catalyst for social justice in the fight against pretrial incarceration. We established a revolving fund used to post bail for people who would otherwise languish in the Lancaster County Prison due to an inability to pay the often arbitrary price of their freedom. Our mission is to alleviate the inequity inherent in the cash bail and pretrial detention systems and restore the presumption of innocence in Lancaster County through direct service, awareness, education, and advocacy.

WHO WE SERVE

We serve our underprivileged neighbors, often people of color, who face disproportionate arrests and pretrial incarceration rates. An estimated 54,572 residents of Lancaster County live in poverty, making them three times as likely to be arrested. These same community members will face the predicament of prolonged pretrial incarceration, forcing them to choose between asserting a defense and pleading guilty to expedite their release. LBF levels the playing field through our direct bail service, giving people a fighting chance in court and in their lives. We also bring awareness to this community issue and advocate for social change.

WHAT NEEDS FUNDING

According to the ACLU-PA, the average bail in Lancaster County in 2016-2017 was $56,862. To date, the average bail per person posted by LBF is $1,818. Funding of $50,000 would ensure the sustainability and capacity of the fund to be responsive to the needs of 10-20 individuals at any given time. Because the money is returned once a case is resolved, the impact of the dollars we raise is compounded over time, enabling LBF to secure the release of multiple people with each donation.

WHO WE COLLABORATE WITH

LBF is a fiscally sponsored project of the Alliance for Global Justice, a 501(c)(3). Locally, we partner with the Lancaster County Reentry Coalition and collaborate with over 70 agencies, organizations striving to ensure that all arrested people are provided with every opportunity for success.

WHY IT MATTERS

In 2021, 69% of people incarcerated at the Lancaster County Prison were not serving sentences, they were being detained pretrial. In real numbers, approximately 500 “presumed innocent” individuals occupied our jail’s cells on any given day last year, many because they could not afford their bail. As a percentage of the jail’s budget, we spent $20,710,005.70 in 2021 to lock up legally innocent people. And this says nothing of the human or societal costs. Pretrial incarceration is harmful, unjust and perpetuates the inequities inherent in our criminal system.

In America, we believe innocent until proven guilty, but when you cage someone against a dollar amount they can’t pay, you are treating them as though they’ve already been convicted.

HOW WE MEASURE IMPACT

The release of those accused but not convicted creates a cascade of positive impacts. We measure our success by calculating the cost-savings to the taxpayer due to less time spent in custody. Further, we measure the number of families reunited, employment retained, and housing sustained. Ultimately, we measure our impact by how much we can improve the quality of life for all residents of Lancaster County.

Does Your Mission Match Ours?

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