

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/cuyahoga-county-running-inhumane-facility-its-not-first-time>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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Protest photo outside of Cuyahoga County Justice Center - Tuesday, January 8, 2019

You've likely seen the headlines: seven people died in the Cuyahoga County jail between June and October 2018, prompting a U.S. Marshals investigation and then, scathing [report](#) detailing the shocking conditions people are subjected to at the hands of the County. Four weeks after the report was released, yet another person died in the jail. This news was devastating.

Cuyahoga County operating a dangerous and inhumane facility? This might feel like *du vu* and that's because it is. **Less than eight weeks before the U.S. Marshalls released their report on the adult jail, the Center for Children's Law and Policy released an equally horrifying [report](#) on conditions in the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center.**

Unfortunately, I hear too few people drawing connections between these two crises. **The very same government actors are responsible for both.** Conditions in Cuyahoga County's two biggest detention centers don't escalate to these heights *without* leadership knowing. In May 2018, before the first person died in the jail, a jail nurse made headlines for [testifying](#) about the unacceptable medical care before Cuyahoga County Council.

And let's remember that, **according to 2015 numbers, three out of four people in the Cuyahoga County jail are legally innocent.** They have been suspected of a crime but might have their charges dropped or be acquitted at trial. Still, many people sit in jail, away from their jobs, homes, and families, simply because they [cannot afford to pay their bond](#). A 2017 [study](#) by the Pretrial Justice Institute found that 30% of Cuyahoga County defendants receiving low level bonds spent the *entire* pretrial period in jail because they did not have \$500 or less to pay a bondsman to secure their release.

Cuyahoga County [is deciding](#) whether to build a new jail. If they do, estimates say the cost could be as high as \$800 million, equal to the county's entire annual budget. **But a new facility will not remedy the most egregious things the U.S. Marshalls found in their November 21, 2018 report:**

In fact, in 2010 Cuyahoga County opened a brand new juvenile facility which, just 8 years later, was subject to the scathing [report](#) mentioned above. **The jail is a mess of the County's own making, which will not be resolved until the root problems are addressed.**

The atrocities cited in the U.S. Marshalls Report aren't just things that happen to other people. Any of us could end up in the Cuyahoga County Jail and this is more likely for those who are black or poor. Take this example: many of us have gotten a traffic ticket. If we can't afford to pay it and then miss our court date for any number of reasons like lack of childcare, lack of transportation to the court, misunderstanding the court documents, or simply forgetfulness, that's considered a misdemeanor. We can be arrested and sit in jail while we await a resolution. **And none of us want to be subjected to what's happening at the Cuyahoga County Jail.**

Cuyahoga County leadership needs to take swift action. [Attend an upcoming County Council meeting](#) and make your voice heard.

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