



## **ACLU Bail Reform Project**

Like many aspects of the criminal justice system, the current approach to money bail is extremely problematic from a policy perspective, a legal perspective, and a moral perspective. In 2013, there were 609,464 jail admissions in Georgia. During an inmate count on August 3, 2017, there were **25,022 people incarcerated statewide who are awaiting trial**, representing **65% of the total statewide jail population**. Many are stuck in jail because they can't afford to pay money bail to secure their release. Pretrial incarceration may last days, months, or even years with devastating consequences for people and their families.

After arrest, individuals who cannot afford bail face an impossible choice: sit in jail for days, months, or possibly years as their case moves through the system; or plead guilty and give up their rights. This choice is faced regardless of an individual's guilt or innocence. This is why, controlling for all other factors, **being jailed pretrial due to unaffordable bail is the single greatest predictor of a conviction**. A study shows that the non-felony conviction rate jumps from 50% for people released pretrial to 92% for those jailed pretrial.<sup>1</sup> The system traps people of low- and moderate-income, tears families apart, leads to lost jobs, housing, and caregiver assistance, and hurts communities. Meanwhile, people who have money can make bail and get out. This is an unfair, discriminatory, and unconstitutional system.

**The goal of the coding project** is to understand who is in jail where and for how long. We have 15 priority areas around the state we would like to have a monthly breakdown of who is in jail by race, charge, severity (misdemeanor or felony), and length of time in jail. We will use this data to help advocate and push for bail reform through community organizing and the legislature.

The 15 priority areas are

- Athens-Clarke
- Bibb
- Chatham
- Cobb
- Columbia/Richmond
- Dekalb
- Dougherty
- Glynn
- Gwinnett
- Hall
- Henry
- Fulton
- Lowndes
- Muscogee
- Whitfield

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<sup>1</sup> See Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Marie VanNostrand & Alexander Holsinger, *Investigating the Impact of Pretrial Detention on Sentencing Outcomes* 10–11 (2013); Mary T. Philips, New York City Crim. Justice Agency, Inc., *Pretrial Detention and Case Outcomes, Part 1: Nonfelony Cases* 25–29 (2007).