

No bricks have yet been laid, yet the new Dane County jail has already cost years of time and millions of dollars of our community's resources. While the current jail has continued to cause harm, on account of its outdated facilities and the practice of locking up vulnerable members of our community, county leadership has done nothing to address these harms. Generations of county leadership have only been able to imagine one answer to the current jail: a new jail. Their failure of imagination has come at a great cost, as proponents of the jail have obstructed progress, wasting time and money that could have been used to seriously address the needs of our community.

The case for a new jail has been made as one of necessity: claiming that the old jail is dangerously outdated, and that the communities of Dane County are experiencing more crime than ever before. This false narrative has been wielded to incarcerate unprecedented numbers of people, and very specifically Black people, throughout Dane County. Our leaders continue to push a narrative that "[By any measure, Dane County has a low jail incarceration rate as compared to national rates.](#)" Misdirections such as this obscure the fact that the incarceration rates in Wisconsin are higher than in Iran, Russia, and China... and the rate is ***eleven times higher for Black people than white people.***

Madison and Dane County are facing deepening crises of houselessness, institutional racism, addiction, and poverty. Yet, our county leaders have prioritized building a new jail. Dane County has grossly neglected the need for free and affordable housing, quality and harm-reducing mental health and substance use treatment, and safe and accessible transportation. Instead, our leaders have spent millions of dollars to plan for a jail that would cost well over \$225 million dollars all while campaigning on platforms of progress and equity. They have done little to address the core harms that perpetuate violence and insecurity in our community.

The community demands a new direction. We demand humane and compassionate approaches to addressing harm, violence, and insecurity. We demand that the county immediately terminate the jail consolidation project. Further, in order to support the safety of our community we further demand that:

- Begin immediate closure of the city/county building jail block
- Transfer the Huber work release program to the Dane County Department of Human Services and close the Ferris Center
- Abolition of cash bail
- Universal mental health care for Dane County residents
- Creation of a transformative community justice center
- Expansion of the CARES, or Community Alternative Response for Emergency Services pilot program
 - The \$0.6 million allocated to CARES in the 2021 Madison City Budget is ludicrous in comparison to the \$84.9 million granted to the Madison Police Department and the \$225 million proposed budget for the Dane County Jail.

- Put an end to drug-related convictions and to offer comprehensive, harm-reduction focused substance use treatment to Dane County residents, including safe and supportive withdrawal care.
- Make housing a human right for everyone in our community by building safe and quality housing for all, including no-income households.

To stop the Dane County Jail project, we will need all of Dane County to voice its opposition and demand county leadership take genuine steps to address the core needs of our communities and implement the initiatives mentioned above. We are asking you to join this fight with us and grow our Jail Abolition Coalition because we must Derail the Jail!

Signing organizations:

- Madison Area Democratic Socialists of America