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## **MNJRC shows wide-reaching consequences of the pretrial system in Hennepin County**

*New research reveals how Hennepin County's pretrial system unjustly destabilizes individuals and families and has wide-reaching consequences for communities*

*Public event shares findings with the community and seeks further engagement on what the findings mean for how to transform our pretrial system in Minnesota*

[Minneapolis, MN] The Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC) is sharing findings from its research on the pretrial system in Hennepin County at a community event at Powderhorn Park Recreation Center this evening starting at 6 pm.

The MNJRC's forthcoming report, *"I'm Suffering Along With Her: The Wide-Reaching Consequences of the Pretrial System in Hennepin County"*, includes four main findings:

- First, there are persisting racial disparities in the Hennepin County pretrial population and detention lengths.
- Second, the pretrial process is harmful and acts as punishment before a finding of guilt.
- Third, the pretrial process causes widespread harm, especially for women of color, destabilizing the lives of defendants' and their loved ones and draining their support networks of their already limited resources.
- Fourth, instead of the claim that cash bail is necessary for ensuring that defendants appear at court, the current cash bail system exacerbates already precarious situations and actually hampers court appearance for many community members in Hennepin County.

The MNJRC's research utilized a mixed methods approach, using both qualitative data (interviews with system actors and people with direct experience paying bail either for themselves or on behalf of a loved one) and quantitative data (pretrial bookings from the Minnesota Department of Corrections spanning from 2017 to 2021) to explore the

question of whether cash bail supports or undermines commonly and communally held values of justice, fairness, and safety.

In addition to the main findings, “our findings also raise questions about the use of ‘affordability’ in setting cash bail,” says **Dr. Victoria Piehowski, MNJRC Research Manager for the project**. “Our interview sample included community members who could, in the technical sense, ‘afford’ cash bail for themselves or their loved ones, but to do so required them to give up their cars and in some cases their housing. Is that really ‘affordable’?”

“In America there is a general expectation that people are presumed innocent until proven guilty, and that the criminal justice system is based on the values of justice, fairness, and safety,” says **Josh Page, Fink Professor of Sociology and Law at the University of Minnesota, project advisor and member of the MNJRC’s Research Steering Committee**. “Instead, these findings identify ways in which the current pretrial system does – and does not – reflect those expectations, and gives us a road map to identify reforms to the system that can both limit the harms in the current system and increase public safety at the same time.”

“There are numerous reports on the disparate impacts of the cash bail system on Black and brown individuals, families, and communities,” says Dr. Katie Remington Cunningham, the MNJRC’s Research Director. “What’s powerful about this report is that the data comes directly from those with personal experience paying cash bail and the impacts it made in their lives.” The MNJRC’s research into the criminal legal system explores its alignment with our commonly held values, based on the belief that it needs to be led by people with direct experience with the system.

Event details:

**Thursday, Sept 7th, 6 pm - 8 pm**  
**Powderhorn Park Recreation Center**  
**821 E 35th St. Minneapolis, MN 55407**

*The event is free, with an option to donate*  
Registration: <https://www.mnjrc.org/events>

Media Resources:

- Video on research findings: [Wide-reaching Community Impacts of the Pretrial Process](#)
- Executive Summary: [“I’m Suffering Along With Her: The Wide-Reaching Consequences of the Pretrial System in Hennepin County”](#)

For further information, please email [info@mnjrc.org](mailto:info@mnjrc.org).

***More on the Minnesota Justice Research Center:***

The Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to driving meaningful change to Minnesota's criminal legal system through rigorous and community-centered research, education, and policy development.

The MNJRC centers our work around exploring values - like humane and fair treatment for all, safety, wellbeing, and trust - and provides our community and policy-makers with information and tools needed to create a criminal legal system that truly delivers justice.

For more information about the MNJRC, go to [mnjrc.org](https://mnjrc.org)