

# Stop the New Jail Plan – \$500 Million Reasons

#NoNewJailCLE #500MillionReasons #CuyahogaSpeakUP

The county is planning to spend over \$550 million dollars of taxpayer funds on a new jail building. A new building to warehouse our family members, friends and neighbors. To give some context, there are national estimates that half of jail populations are simply people awaiting trial, viewed as innocent in the eyes of the law, but separated from family and at risk of losing employment, housing and custody of their own children by a cash bail system that punishes the poor. A new building with no community oversight, even after the series of tragic deaths and scandals that caused the US Marshals to deem it one of the worst jails in the entire country. A new jail would instantly become the largest mental health provider in the county, when we know people can't get well in a cell. A new and larger building while they can't even staff the current building, leading to 23 hour lockdowns on a regular basis. That kind of isolation is torture.

The city and county have been slow to utilize the tools already at their disposal. Tools like the diversion center could divert more than 50 people each week from ever having to enter the jail. The administrators have failed to maintain their own safety policies creating an environment rife with drug overdoses and inmate abuses. They now push a plan forward without any meaningful community input in the process. Our voices must be heard!

County officials are rushing to execute this plan as news reports allege conflicts of interest and insider deals regarding the jail site selection process. This jail would be the largest taxpayer expense in county history. They are rushing to execute this plan before up-to-date data is available to support needed capacity. We must ask ourselves, who benefits from rushing this project through? Who is profiting from this at the expense of people's lives?

There is a vision for another way. We can invest in affordable and supportive housing as a foundation for community stability. We can invest in Care Response models that intervene in moments of crisis without police and usher people through the continuum of care to address their mental and physical health needs. We can invest in pretrial services to assist people with the legal counsel they need. We can end cash bail. We can invest in community based re-entry services for people exiting the jail, supporting people to better integrate back into their families and communities. We can invest in economic opportunities for long exploited neighborhoods. We can invest in equitable transit. We can invest in our schools and our libraries.

We can invest in our future.

Signed,

Cuyahoga County Jail Coalition