SPOKANE COUNTY AWARDED ADDITIONAL $1.9 MILLION BY MACARTHUR FOUNDATION SAFETY AND JUSTICE CHALLENGE TO ADVANCE LOCAL JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORM

Spokane County, Wash. – January 30, 2019 – Spokane City and County are the recipients of a $1.9 million grant by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to continue efforts to advance local criminal justice system reform and safely reduce Spokane’s jail population, bringing the Foundation’s total investment in Spokane to $3.8 to date. The grant is part of the Safety and Justice Challenge, a $166 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails.

The Safety and Justice Challenge is supporting local leaders in Spokane and across the country determined to tackle one of the greatest drivers of over-incarceration in America – the misuse and overuse of jails. Spokane was first selected to join the collaborative Safety and Justice Challenge Network in 2015 and has since used the resources and funding provided by the Challenge to implement bold reforms, including creating and expanding diversion programs, improving case processing across all three courts, implementing evidence based practices pre-trial, and addressing racial and ethnic disparities across the system. As a result, Spokane has expanded the Office of Pre-Trial Services, adopted the Public Safety Assessment tool to facilitate pre-trial release decisions, and trained over 200 City and County personnel in implicit bias.

Spokane County was selected for additional funding based on the promise and progress of work to date. This new round of funding will provide Spokane City and County and other local partners with additional support and continued expert technical assistance to strengthen and expand strategies that address the main drivers of local jail incarceration, with the goal of decreasing average length of stay from 18 days to 14 days, and reducing Spokane’s average daily jail population by 15 percent over the next two years.

Chair of the Spokane County Board of Commissioners, Mary Kuney stated: “As we move forward, safely reducing our jail population continues to be a key component of our regional justice reform priorities. We have learned during the first two phases of this grant how important it is to work with our regional stakeholders to attain measurable outcomes. We have set ambitious goals that we anticipate, upon completion, will make us a model for others across the country. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the MacArthur Foundation and expanding our efforts to create a fair justice system that is highly effective for everyone. I want to thank the Foundation for their continued investment in Spokane County.”
In partnership with City and County Prosecutors, Public Defenders, the Office of Pre-Trial Services, judges, jail staff, law enforcement, and community leaders, Spokane has developed a comprehensive regional plan for additional reform strategies over the next two years. Key strategies and initiatives to create a safer, more effective system include:

- Implementing an evidence-based pretrial risk assessment tool, the Public Safety Assessment;
- Establishing a pre-filing prosecutorial diversion pilot;
- Improving case processing efficiency; and
- Improving data collection, analysis, and transparency.

Community members and leaders have a critical role to play in the success of the Safety and Justice Challenge. Indeed, $150,000 of the award is allocated to a supplemental community engagement grant, drafted by community leaders. The grant will facilitate dialogue between community members and system stakeholders and will also establish a peer navigator training program for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Carmen Pacheco-Jones, who was integral to the community engagement application said: “We are excited for the opportunity to participate in the Safety and Justice Challenge in order to ensure that the real life experiences of individuals in our community shape the efforts that will directly impact them. We are grateful to the MacArthur Foundation, as well as officials at the City and County, who support our vision and value our partnership.”

Three years after its public launch, the Challenge Network has grown into a collaborative of 52 counties, cities, and states modeling and inspiring reforms to create fairer, more effective local justice systems across the country.

“There is a growing demand for criminal justice reform to bend the curve of incarceration in the United States and achieve fairer, more equitable outcomes for our families and communities,” said Laurie Garduque, MacArthur’s Director of Justice Reform. “While progress is not always easy, jurisdictions across the country are proving it is possible to rethink local justice systems from the ground up with forward-looking, smart solutions that address racial and ethnic disparities while engaging communities in reform efforts. MacArthur is increasing our investment in these cities and counties because we are seeing promising results and an appetite for more reform as evidenced by the diversity and creativity of the solutions implemented and tested across the Challenge Network.”

“The overarching goal of this criminal justice reform work is to eliminate unnecessary incarceration,” says Spokane Mayor David Condon. “Participating in the Safety and Justice Challenge has been crucial in helping us make headway toward this important goal. The additional support provided by this award will help us continue to push our justice reform efforts further.”
Several of the nation's leading criminal justice organizations will continue to provide technical assistance and counsel to Spokane partners, and the other jurisdictions involved in the Challenge: the Center for Court Innovation, the Institute for State and Local Governance at the City University of New York, the Justice Management Institute, Justice System Partners, the Pretrial Justice Institute, the Vera Institute of Justice, Policy Research, Inc., and the W. Haywood Burns Institute.


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About the MacArthur Foundation
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supports creative people, effective institutions, and influential networks building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. MacArthur is placing a few big bets that truly significant progress is possible on some of the world’s most pressing social challenges, including over-incarceration, global climate change, nuclear risk, and significantly increasing financial capital for the social sector. In addition to the MacArthur Fellows Program, the Foundation continues its historic commitments to the role of journalism in a responsible and responsive democracy, as well as the strength and vitality of our headquarters city, Chicago. More information about the Foundation’s criminal justice reform work can be found at www.macfound.org/criminaljustice.

About Spokane County
Spokane County government serves half a million citizens and 13 municipal jurisdictions, making it the fourth-largest county in the State of Washington. For more information, visit www.spokanecounty.org, like us on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter.

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